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BY CHARLES N. LURIE

HOW TO SAY IT

MAKE 'EM LAUGH!

MAKE 'EM LAUGH AGAIN!

EVERYDAY SAYINGS

Everyday Sayings

Their Meanings Explained

Their Origins Given

BY

CHARLES N. LURIE

AUTHOR OF "HOW TO SAY IT," ETC.



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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EVERYDAY SAYINGS



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Charles N. Lurie



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FOREWORD

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All thought-expression in speech and in writing that rises above the simplest wording, involves or may involve the use of "figures of speech"—words and phrases to be understood in other than their literal significance. Consciously or unconsciously, civilized men and women employ such words and phrases to give color and shading to their communications. When the user of figures of speech has read widely and deeply, his language abounds in metaphors derived from his acquaintance with ancient and modern authors; when he is less erudite, he gets them from the verbal currency of his daily life. Slang—when it is not utterly meaningless—is frequently only figurative language that has caught the popular fancy and has acquired wide currency. It might be said, perhaps, that the use of figurative language is a measure of the advancement of civilization, were it not for the fact that the word-of-mouth communications of many untutored peoples abound in metaphors taken from their environment untouched by advancement.

The purpose of the present work is the explanation, in simple wording, of many of the figures of speech encountered in the daily reading of newspapers, magazines and books, as well as in every-day speech. They crop up continually, in all sorts of places. Pick up a well edited newspaper, and scan the leading editorials. The odds are in favor of finding therein much figurative language taken from

classical and modern literature. Turn to the sporting pages; many of the best writers on sports interperse in their articles literary allusions taken from a wide range of reading. Baseball reporting and the descriptions of prizefighting are especially rich in such allusions. Even newspaper advertisements make use of flowery verbiage.

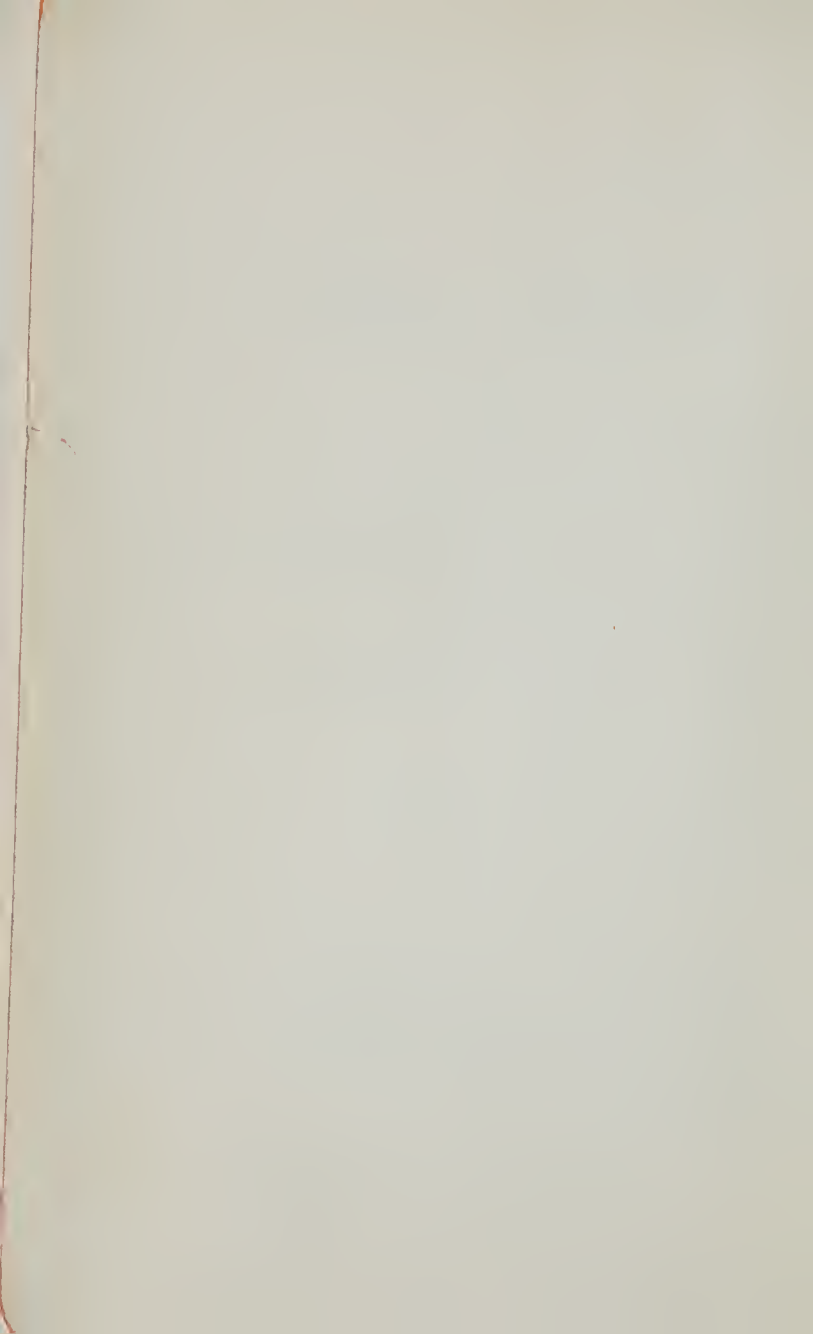
While many of our common English figures of speech are well known and are employed almost daily, others are in less frequent use and require explanation. The aim of this book is, therefore, the answering of the question, "What does that mean?" when the reader or the hearer is confronted by some such word or phrase as "Herculean labors," "Pecksniffian," "sackcloth and ashes," "thumbs down," "rich as a nabob," "the touch of Midas," "carrying a message to Garcia," "Mrs. Grundy," "Hobson's choice," "a Joe Miller," "Tartuffe," and hundreds of others, ancient and modern.

The words and phrases chosen for elucidation have been drawn from many sources. Every one of the articles is virtually the outcome of a chance meeting on the highways and by-ways of literature. Some of them concern old and familiar friends whose origins are well known, but writing the explanations of the others involved, in many instances, long and diligent research and the thumbing of many books. Acknowledgment of indebtedness to many authorities is made in the list of works consulted that is printed at the beginning of the volume.

C. N. L.

BOOKS CONSULTED IN WRITING "EVERYDAY SAYINGS"

Brewer's "Reader's Handbook"
"Fact, Fancy and Fable"
Bulfinch's "Age of Fable"
"Manual of Classical Literature"
Harper's "Classical Dictionary"
Webster's "New International Dictionary"
Funk & Wagnalls' "New Standard Dictionary"
"Encyclopædia Britannica"
"Everyman's Encyclopedia"
Bartlett's "Familiar Quotations"
Bartlett's "Dictionary of Americanisms"
"The Arabian Nights"
"Fugitive Facts"
"American Political Dictionary"
Chambers' "Book of Days"
The Bible
Works of Shakespeare
 Dickens
 Scott
"English Folk and Fairy Tales"
Guerber's "Myths of Greece and Rome"
Skinner's "Readings in Folk-Lore"
Gayley's "Classic Myths in English Literature"
With others)



Everyday Sayings

Everyday Sayings

Aaron's Rod

"Among these groups was the Whig party, destined to play the part of Aaron's rod and swallow up all the others," says a writer on American politics.

The reference is to the Book of Exodus, seventh chapter, ninth to twelfth verses, in which it is related that the Lord told Aaron and Moses that when Pharaoh should ask for a miracle, Aaron should cast his rod before Pharaoh, and it should become a serpent. This Aaron did, and then the Egyptian ruler called the wise men and the sorcerers and the magicians of Egypt, who "did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents; but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods."

The name "Aaron's serpent" has been applied to England because she absorbed the various petty states of India, and to Prussia because she did likewise with smaller German states.

Abelard and Heloise

So devoted a pair of lovers were Abelard and Heloise that their names are sometimes used by writers as synonyms for affection. The circumstances of their love affair, with its sad ending, have given it a foremost place among the romances of history.

Abelard was a celebrated teacher and ecclesiastic of France in the twelfth century. After establish-

ing a high reputation for learning, at the age of thirty-six he became enamored of Heloise, a damsel of seventeen, and became her tutor. They were secretly married and she bore him a son. Not to impede Abelard's advancement in the church she declared that there was no marriage, and this led to the persecution of Abelard. The pair were parted and Heloise became a nun. The tale of Abelard and Heloise has furnished a theme for many poets and prose writers, and several books have been written about their lives.

Abigail

An "abigail"—spelled sometimes with a large "A"—means a servant girl, or, more particularly, a lady's maid. Abigail, wife of Nabal, who introduced herself to David and afterward married him, is a character in the Old Testament (I Samuel, xxv, 3). The name is said to be derived from two words meaning "source of joy."

"Abigail" was a popular middle-class Christian female name in the sixteenth century, and Beaumont and Fletcher, joint author of English plays, in "The Scornful Lady," give the name "Abigail" to the "waiting gentlewoman." Swift, Fielding and other story writers of the eighteenth century used it in the same sense.

About the beginning of the eighteenth century Queen Anne of England was served by a Mrs. Masham, whose original name was Abigail Hill, and this served to popularize the use of the name as a synonym for a lady's maid.

Above the Salt; see *Below the Salt*.

Abracadabra

"You cannot lift politics to a higher plane by any mystical, repeated abracadabra; you must teach the

citizens that only through their own efforts will their government be purified," insisted a preacher in print.

What did he mean by "abracadabra"? The word indicates a very ancient incantation, or charm. It is impracticable to trace its first appearance, but its first mention in print, as a word of might from which fevers flee, is in the works of the Gnostic physician, Serenus Sammonicus, in the second century of our era. His prescription was to write the magic word many times, in the form of a triangle. It was inscribed on a square of paper, the paper was then folded in such manner as to hide the writing, and then stitched with a white thread in the form of a cross. Thus made ready, the prescription was to be worn about the neck of a fever patient for nine days. At the end of that time the sufferer was to proceed in solemn silence at the break of day to the brink of a stream flowing eastward, remove the paper from his neck and cast it behind him without opening it.

Abraham's Bosom

Perhaps an older generation, more familiar with the Bible than some of the younger folks, will recognize "Abraham's bosom" as a figure of speech taken from Holy Scripture. They will possibly be familiar with it as meaning a place to which the blessed go after death. Thus, to say, "He reclines now in Abraham's bosom" means, "He has gone to the place of reward for the righteous."

The figure of speech is taken from an ancient custom of permitting a dear friend to recline at dinner on your bosom. Thus, the beloved John reclined on the bosom of Jesus. In Luke xvi, 22, we read of Lazarus: "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abra-

ham's bosom; the rich man also died, and was buried."

There is an old saying, "There is no leaping from Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom"—meaning that those who live and die in sin should not expect to go to heaven at death.

Achilles' Heel

We all have our "heel of Achilles"—that is, our vulnerable place or spot through which we can be reached or wounded.

The story goes that Achilles, the chief hero of Homer's "Iliad," was the son of Peleus and Thetis, one of the Nereids. At his birth his mother, to render him invulnerable, dipped him in the River Styx. But she had to hold him by the heel, which thus failed of immersion. As a consequence, when he engaged in the Trojan war, he could not be reached by the weapons of his opponents, until Paris, to whom the god Apollo disclosed the one weak spot of Achilles, aimed an arrow at his heel, and wounded him mortally.

The tendon or sinew that runs from the heel to the calf of the leg is known as "the tendon of Achilles."

Accolade

Writing of some modern women authors, a literary critic said that "they seem to write less for the accolade of a good book than for the back-pat of 'but what a charming person the writer shows herself to be!'"

The "accolade" was the ancient ceremony used in conferring knighthood. It was supposed in former times that it consisted of an embrace, but it is now believed to have been a slight blow on the cheek or shoulder, with the flat of a sword blade.

The word is derived, it is believed, from the Latin words *ad collum*, meaning "on the neck." The ancient chronicles of the days of chivalry are full of accounts of the ceremonies that accompanied the accolade.

The word "accolade" is used also in music to describe a brace, or line serving as a brace, to join two or more staves carrying simultaneous parts.

According to Cocker

There is an old English phrase, "According to Cocker," which means about the same as our modern "O. K." or "all right." By its derivation it should mean "mathematically correct," because it keeps in mind a famous English mathematician.

Edward Cocker, born about 1631 and died 1675, was an English engraver and teacher. His famous "Arithmetik," published after his death, was popular for more than a century, and more than one hundred editions were sold. It was confined to problems of figuring that arise in course of commerce. Cocker published also a "Guide to Penmanship," a "Tutor to Arithmetic," and a "Compleat Arithmetician." He is mentioned in the famous Diary of Samuel Pepys, who calls Cocker "the famous writing master," and speaks highly of his skill in engraving.

"According to Cocker" was a phrase much used by the older English writers, but is now seldom seen.

Aceldama

In an address by John Quincy Adams, who was Secretary of State, and later President of the United States, he said:

"America has seen that probably for centuries to come all the contests of that Aceldama, the Euro-

pean world, will be contests of inveterate power."

"Aceldama," used by Mr. Adams in its figurative sense, and employed sometimes by writers of editorials, means a battlefield, or place where much blood has been shed. To the south of Jerusalem there was, in Biblical times, a field called by that name. It was purchased by the priests with the thirty pieces of silver received by Judas for the betrayal of Christ, and was appropriated as a cemetery for strangers.

There are two references to "Aceldama" in the New Testament, in the eighth verse of the twenty-seventh chapter of Matthew, and in the nineteenth verse of the first chapter of the Acts.

Acquaintance, Scraping an; See *Scraping an Acquaintance*.
Adam, Old; see *Old Adam*.

Adamant

Adamant represents firmness or hardness in the highest degree, hence its use, as applied to persons, to indicate the possession of these qualities. "He could not be moved by pleas for mercy; he was adamant in his determination that the law must be upheld," said an editorial writer.

It was believed formerly that there was a stone adamant, of impenetrable hardness, and ancient and modern writers used it to symbolize such hardness. In modern mineralogy the word has no special significance, however, and the use of the word is now entirely poetic or figurative. The diamond and other extremely hard substances are sometimes spoken of as "adamant" or "adamantine." Some poets use the word as meaning the magnet; "as true as steel to adamant," writes one.

Adding Insult to Injury

This phrase is from a fable of classical times quoted by the Latin writer, Phædrus, from the more

ancient version by Æsop. The fable relates how a bold man who was bitten on the head by a fly, in trying to kill the insect gave himself a sound smack. Whereupon the fly said jeeringly, "You wanted to kill me for a torch—what will you do to yourself, *now that you have added insult to injury?*" In this as in many other phrases, we quote the classics unknowingly.

Admirable Crichton

This term, "Admirable Crichton," is applied to a prodigy of learning or polite deportment. It is considered highly laudatory.

The original "Admirable Crichton" is one of the puzzles of history; one writer says of him, "Romance and tradition have been so busy with his name that it is difficult to form any just estimate either of his life or character." He was born in Scotland in 1560, and at the early age of fifteen took his degree of master of arts at the University of St. Andrews. He then went to Paris for further studies, and after serving for a short time in the French army, he issued a challenge to all men to meet him in dispute, or argument, in twelve languages, upon all subjects. In spite of spending in dancing and music the interval between the issuance of the challenge and the time of trial, he vanquished all his opponents. He repeated in Italy the victories of his career in France, and in 1585 he was appointed tutor to the Duke of Mantua's son. In the same year he was stabbed to death by his pupil in a drunken brawl.

Adonis

"Handsome as Adonis" is a common figure of speech. The old tales represented him as the type of masculine beauty, and many poems were written

about him. Among them was Shakespeare's longest poem, "Venus and Adonis."

According to mythology, Adonis was a Greek hunter. He was killed by a wild boar, and descended to the lower world. Aphrodite (or Venus), who loved him, sprinkled nectar on his blood, and from it sprang the anemone. Persephone refused to give him up to Aphrodite, and Zeus (or Jupiter) settled the dispute by allowing him to spend one third of the year with each goddess in turn, and one third of the year he belonged to himself.

In Shakespeare's poem he adopted the legend that the body of Adonis was changed into the anemone after his death.

Advocate, Devil's; see *Devil's Advocate*

Affair of Honor

A dispute to be settled by a duel was, in feudal times, an affair of honor. Duels were generally provoked by offences against the arbitrary rules of etiquette, courtesy, or matters "of honor"; and, as these offences were not recognizable in the law courts, they were settled by private combat.

Debts of honor were so called because they were contracted by wagering or gambling, and these debts could not be enforced as such by law.

Word of honor implies a gage which cannot be violated without placing the breaker of it beyond the pale of respectable and good society.

After Me, the Deluge

Sometimes, when a person wishes to express recklessness of the consequences of an action, or a course of action, he says, "After me, the deluge"—meaning, "I will persist in what it is my will or pleasure to do now, let the results be what they may,

even if I am engulfed by them; after me the deluge, or flood."

There has been some little controversy or argument concerning the first use of the phrase. It is generally ascribed to Prince Metternich, the Austrian statesman, but it is also believed that he took it from Madame Pompadour, the favorite of King Louis XV of France.

She was a woman of unbounded extravagance, so much so, in fact, that the ministers of the king remonstrated with her, declaring that her enormous expenditures would ruin the kingdom. She laughed at them and said, "Après nous le déluge" ("After us the flood").

Against the Grain

Two origins are given, by authorities on the uses of words, of the expression, "against the grain," meaning against one's inclination, against one's inmost feelings, etc.

Brewer, the learned English authority who is usually considered accurate, says that "to go against the grain" means against one's inclination, and that the allusion is to wood, which cannot be easily planed the wrong way of the grain. But there is other authority, and perhaps better, for saying that "against the grain" comes from the French "contre le gré," which means, "against the will." In the famous "Diary" of Samuel Pepys he says: "It coming from him against the gré, I perceive, of my lord treasurer." A commentator on Pepys says that "against the gré" is apparently a translation of the French "contre le gré," and presumably an expression in common use in the time of Pepys; that is, in the second half of the seventeenth century.

Webster's New International Dictionary does not give this second explanation of the term, and says

simply, that "against the grain" means "against the fiber of the wood; figuratively, against one's disposition or feelings."

Age of Gold; see *Golden Age*.

Ages, Dark; see *Dark Ages*.

Air, Beating; see *Beating the Air*.

All Cry and No Wool; see *Great Cry and Little Wool*.

All Fours, Going on; see *Going on All Fours*.

All My Eye

"That's 'all my eye,'" says a person when he wishes to express emphatic disbelief in something that is being told to him. The expression is very old; sometimes it takes the form of "all my eye and Betty Martin."

Its origin is often related as follows: A sailor went into a foreign church, where he heard a priest or someone else using the words, "Ah, mihi, beate Martine." This is an invocation to Saint Martin to grant the wishes of the petitioner. On giving account of his adventures the sailor told of what he had heard. He said he could not make much of it, but it sounded to him like "All my eye and Betty Martin."

Probably this story is not well founded, since "mihi," as students of Latin know, is not pronounced "my eye," but "mihi," or mee ee."

All My Swans Are Geese

It happens often that "the best laid plans of mice and men gang aft aglee," as Burns wrote, and then one may say, "All my swans have been turned into geese." Anyone who has ever seen a swan and a goose together, and has compared the beautiful long-necked bird, so graceful on the water, with its humble relative, will understand the allusion. Having your swans turned to geese means suffering disappointment. Sometimes one says, "All his swans

are turned to geese" of a person whose boasting has turned into smoke.

"Every man thinks his own geese are swans," is another old saying. It means that everyone is prejudiced by self-love or natural affection. The French say, "To every bird his own nest seems beautiful"; the Germans, "A good mother believes her own children are among the most beautiful." There are similar proverbs, of course, in many other languages—probably in every language.

Allowance, Monkey's; see *Monkey's Allowance*

Alpha and Omega

Describing the latest fashions, a writer on style says that "clean cut, beautifully tailored slender lines are the Alpha and Omega of our existence."

The "Alpha and Omega" of anything are the beginning and the end. The phrase is derived from the Greek alphabet, in which alpha is the first letter and omega the last. It has gained wide currency through its use as a religious symbol in the Christian church, in which Christ is called "the Alpha and the Omega," and the Greek letters are seen sometimes inscribed or carved on church edifices, etc.

In Revelation, chapter i, verse 8, we read: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

Amazons

"Amazons" is a name given to women warriors. It is applied sometimes to a woman of masculine boldness who is willing to fight for her rights.

According to ancient writers, the Amazons were a nation of fighting women who allowed no men to live among them, but marched to battle under command of their queen. They found husbands among

the men of neighboring nations. If sons were born to them, they either sent them to their fathers, or killed them.

One account says that the Amazons lost their husbands when the latter raided a neighboring nation, and the widows, incited to action by the sorrows they had undergone on account of their husbands, resolved to form a State in which only women should be allowed to live. It is related that they were conquered by Theseus about 1231 B. C.

Three nations of Amazons are mentioned by ancient writers; one in Asia Minor, on the shores of the Black Sea; one in Scythia, which was near the Carpathian Mountains, and one in Northern Africa.

Ambrosia

In its original use—that is, as used by the ancient Greeks—the word “ambrosia” meant the food of the gods, the eating of which made them immortal. In later figurative usage, however, the word is used for anything that is very delicious to the taste or fragrant in perfume. The poet Pope speaks of “ambrosial curls,” and an English prose writer said: “Husband and wife must drink from the cup of conjugal life; but they must both taste the same ambrosia or the same gall.”

Ambrosia is sometimes confused with nectar, the drink of the gods. Homer called ambrosia the food and nectar the drink, but Sappho and some others reversed the names, making ambrosia the drink and nectar the food.

Ambrosia was represented sometimes, also, as a perfume or unguent.

Amende Honorable

To make the “amende honorable” means to offer whatever reparation is in the power of an offender.

Webster's New International Dictionary says that "the amende honorable is a form of reparation for a crime or injury consisting in such a formal and humiliating acknowledgment of offense and apology as will restore the injured or offended honor of the one wronged.

"This punishment was used in the early church, and for various legal offenders under the French, Roman, Dutch and other legal systems. In the more infamous form of the punishment the offender was compelled to make his apology in the church or court, with bare feet and head, dressed in a white chemise, and with a torch in his hand. It was abolished in France in 1791, restored in 1825, abolished again in 1830, but survived under the name 'reparation' until abolished in 1894. In South Africa it has been replaced by pecuniary damages."

As the phrase is now used, it refers to any apology or reparation made to an injured person.

Amuck, Running; see *Running Amuck*.

Anathema

"He was anathema to his political opponents, who tried by every method in their power to have him forced out," says a newspaper editorial.

"Anathema" means something that is hated so whole-heartedly that it is considered a curse. The word is Greek, and means anything that is dedicated or set up as a votive offering. Literally the word means "to place," or "set up," in allusion to the mythological custom of hanging in the temple of a patron god something devoted to him. Thus, Gordius hung up his yoke and beam; the shipwrecked hung up their tools, etc.

Hence, anathema meant something set apart for

destruction, and thus it came to acquire the meaning of something that was accursed.

Anchor, Swallowing; see *Swallowing the Anchor*.

Andrew, Merry; see *Merry Andrew*.

Anise and Cummin

"But the Secretary must know that all this is but as anise and cummin compared with the weightier matters of the law," said a recent editorial.

To pay attention to "anise and cummin" means giving heed to unimportant things while neglecting those of far greater importance. The allusion is Biblical; the passage is found in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter xxiii, verse 23, in which Christ reproves the scribes and Pharisees, saying "Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

Anise and cummin (the latter is spelled sometimes cumin) are both plants cultivated in the Orient for their aromatic seeds, used as spices and in medicine. Spenser speaks of "rank smelling rue, and cumin good for eyes."

Apache

The name "Apache" is applied, in the slang of recent years, to a member of the gangs of ruffians that infest the lowest quarters of the city of Paris, and live by robbery and crime of various sorts. Some optimists say that the war wiped out the Apaches, but some of them evaded military service, and some survived it.

Emile Darsy, a French reporter, is credited with the idea of applying the name "Apache" to the Parisian ruffian. He had heard of the Apache Indians of America as a peculiarly savage and blood-

thirsty tribe, and believed their name would fit well upon the gangsters with whom the police of Paris were having a hard time, about twenty-five years ago. The name stuck, and has found its way into the dictionaries. In America we pronounce the name "Apache" in three syllables, but the French, failing to put an accent upon the final "e," call it "A-pash."

Apollo Belvidere

As Helen of Troy is often held up to admiration as the ideal of feminine beauty, so the Apollo Belvidere is considered the model of manly physical perfection. There is this difference—while Helen of Troy was a woman, real or mythical, the Apollo Belvidere is only a statue. To refer to a man as an "Apollo Belvidere" is to pay him a very high compliment.

This statue of Apollo stands in the Vatican, in Rome, in the gallery of the Belvidere, whence it derives its name. One critic calls it "one of the most perfect statues ever created by the sculptor's art—possibly the greatest existing work of antiquity." The statue's origin and date are unknown, it being variously attributed to the sculptors Agasias, Praxiteles and Calamis. It was found in 1503 in the ruins of ancient Antium, in Italy, and was subsequently placed in the Vatican by Pope Julius II.

Apple of Discord

The apple of discord is, of course any matter that causes contention or quarreling. The name arose as follows, according to classical mythology:

At the marriage of Thetis and Peleus, where all the gods and goddesses were assembled, Discord threw on the table a golden apple "for the most beautiful." Juno, Minerva and Venus put in their respective

claims; and it being impossible to settle the point the judgment was left to Paris, who awarded the apple to Venus. This brought upon him the vengeance of Juno and Minerva, and to this cause is traced the Trojan war, which plays so large a part in classical lore.

The apple is prominent in the folklore of ancient countries. It seems to have been the favorite fruit of the olden days.

Apple-Pie Order

"Apple-pie order" means perfect order or arrangement. It is generally believed that the expression is an Americanism, but this is not so, for it was used by Sir Walter Scott and other English and Scottish writers.

One authority says, however, that the reason for the expression lies in the fact that the New England woman always cut her apples in slices or three-cornered pieces, then placed them in rows, one following another around the edge of the pie. She filled in the center promiscuously. After dusting the pie-filling with sugar and spice, she put on the top crust and pinched it evenly around the edge. "This illustrates a strong New England trait, a love for orderliness in bureau drawers as well as in apple pies," says one writer.

It is said also that the expression comes from the old phrase, "cap à pied," meaning from head to foot, used of a knight in full armour.

Araby the Blest

In the olden days—that is, before the earth was so well explored as it is now—Arabia had the reputation of being a sort of early paradise. It was called "Araby the Blest," and was especially noted

the home of sweet perfumes and incense laden breezes. Now that knowledge of geography is widespread, we know that Arabia is not at all an ideal place of abode, but references to "Araby the Blest" are still found in literature.

"In *Paradise Lost*," Milton refers to Arabia as follows:

"As when to them who sail
Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past
Mozambic, at sea northeast winds blow
Sabeian odors from the spicy shore
Of Araby the Blest, with such delay
Well pleased they slack their course, and many a
league
Cheered with the grateful smell old Ocean smiles."

Arcana

"He is a member of the inner council; he has been admitted to the sacred arcana of his party." The sentence is quoted from a recent editorial.

The word "arcana" is the plural of "arcanum," meaning a secret. It is derived from the Latin word "arcere," meaning to inclose. It is well known in literature for its connection with the ancient astrologers and alchemists, who professed that they sought the "arcana," or hidden secrets, the ulterior meaning of things.

One authority says that the "arcana" were the great secrets sought by the alchemists, such as the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life, or their most valued preparations, such as the double arcanum (sulphate of potash), the coral arcanum (deutoxide of red mercury, prepared with nitric acid), and the jovial arcanum (a mixture of deutoxide of tin and nitrate of mercury).

Arden, Enoch; see *Enoch Arden*.

Argonauts

Adventurers who set forth boldly in search of fame or fortune, pioneers who lead the way into unexplored lands, are known as "Argonauts," taking their names from the legendary Greek heroes of antiquity who undertook a voyage to unknown seas in a vessel called the *Argo* (whence the title "Argonauts"). They were commanded by Jason. After four months of peril and adventure they returned to Iolchus, and Jason dedicated the *Argo* to Neptune at the Isthmus of Corinth.

The common interpretation of the legend is that Jason's expedition was simply a voyage of discovery. The reputed search for the Golden Fleece is probably a later appendage to the tale.

The name Argonauts is given sometimes to the Californian "Forty-Niners." (See also "Jason's Quest.")

Argus-Eyed

"I find the minimum of danger midway between streets, where one can look both ways; not having the eyes of Argus, this is as much as I can manage, and it makes it safer to avoid the corners," says the writer of a letter to a newspaper.

According to ancient mythology, Argus, the "hundred eyed," was the son of Arestor. He was surnamed "Panoptes," which means, in Greek, "all seeing," because he had one hundred eyes, only two of which slept at one time. Appointed by Juno to be the guardian of Io, whom Jupiter had changed into a heifer, Argus was lulled to sleep by Mercury with his flute. Then Mercury put him to death. Juno thereupon afterwards transplanted the eyes of Argus into the tail of the peacock.

Ark of the Covenant

Anything that is sacred beyond ordinary estimation—that is so holy that not even a profane finger may be laid upon it—may be referred to as “an ark of the covenant.” For example, those who hold that the Constitution of the United States embodies all the wisdom of statesmanship sometimes refer to it as the “American ark of the covenant.”

The reference is to the sacred ark of the covenant between the Almighty and the Hebrews. Previous to the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians, the ark of the covenant was contained therein, but what became of it after that time is unknown. It is believed by some that it was taken away or destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, but certain of the Jews believe that it was concealed from the spoilers, and account it as one of the hidden things which will be revealed by the Messiah. That the old ark was not contained in the second Temple all Jewish writers agree, and the absence of the Ark is one of the important particulars in which this Temple is held to have been inferior to that of Solomon.

Armageddon

We heard much of “Armageddon” during the great World War, when many persons thought that the time foretold in the Revelation of St. John the Divine, the last book in the Scriptures, had come.

Armageddon is the name of the place in which a terrific battle is to be fought out on “the great day of God,” between the powers of good and evil, and the name is applied sometimes to the battle itself. It means the last great conflict, or, perhaps, the last day itself. By extension, the term is applied sometimes to any tremendous battle, even to a political contest.

In Revelation xvi, 16, we read: “And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew

tongue Armageddon." There follows a description of a great earthquake, "such as was not since men were upon the earth," and other great afflictions that shall come upon mankind on that last day.

Arms of Morpheus; see *Morpheus*.

Artful Dodger

This is the name which Dickens gave to a character in one of his most popular novels, "Oliver Twist." "The Artful Dodger," whose real name was John Dawkins, was a young thief, an adept in all sorts of villainy, and exceedingly shrewd and skilful.

Dickens describes a game of cards in which "The Artful Dodger" takes a hand:

"No more of it for me, thankee, Fagin," replies Mr. Chitling; "I've had enough. That 'ere Dodger has such a run of luck that there's no standing again' him."

To which Fagin replies: "Ha, ha! my dear, you must get up very early in the morning, to win against the Dodger."

"Morning!" says Charley Bates; "you must put your boots on overnight, and have a telescope at each eye, and an opera glass between your shoulders."

Ashes and Sackcloth; see *Sackcloth and Ashes*.

Aspen

One of the most commonly used figures of speech in the English language is "trembling like an aspen." It really should be, and is put sometimes, "trembling like an aspen leaf."

According to a very old legend, the leaves of the aspen tree are said to tremble with shame and horror because the Cross was made of its wood. The natural explanation of the continual agitation of the leaves is this: The leaf is broad and is placed on a

long leaf-stalk that is so flexible as to be scarcely able to support it in an upright position. The upper part of the stalk, on which the movement depends, is flattened, and, being at right angles with the leaf, is peculiarly likely to be acted upon by the least breath of air.

Sometimes a chattering tongue, one that is never quiet, is called an "aspen leaf."

Asphodel

Greek and Roman poets and prose writers feigned that the plant asphodel brought forgetfulness of earthly cares and sorrows, and the tradition has been continued by the moderns. Recently a newspaper poet said, "Ah, there are surely fields of asphodel where all earth's bitterness is soothed away, and failure but a far, faint memory!"

Shakespeare has no reference to the asphodel, but Milton, Pope and other famous Englishmen make mention of the plant. In Pope's translation of the "Odyssey" we read: "And rest at last where souls unbodied dwell, in ever-flowing meads of asphodel."

The asphodel is a kind of lily which grows in southern Europe. The white asphodel is found near the Mediterranean; the yellow asphodel has red berries and is found wild in Sicily, Dalmatia, the islands of the Peloponnesus and the Crimea. The early French and English poets gave the name asphodel to the daffodil.

Assassins

An assassin is one who murders another, or attempts to do so, by surprise or by some secret means or treachery. The term is generally applied to the assailant of a president, a monarch or other prominent person.

The word "assassin" is derived from hashish, the

opiate derived from the juice of the leaves of hemp. It was originally the name of a sect of Mohammedans. Its founder, named Hassan Sabbah, lived in the eleventh century, and the headquarters of the sect were in Cairo. They were freethinkers, and were opposed to the ruling powers in the Mohammedan countries. The head of the Assassins was called the chief or "jebel," also "the Old Man of the Mountain." The main body of his followers were known as the "Fedavies," or "devoted ones," a band of resolute, blindly obedient servants of the "Old Man." Before he assigned them to their bloody tasks he used to have them thrown into a state of ecstasy by the intoxicating influence of hashish. In 1255 or 1256 the power of the Assassins was overthrown by the invasion of Persia by the Mongols, but it is believed that there are still in northern Persia some traces of the society.

Asses' Bridge; see *Pons Asinorum*.

Atkins, Tommy; see *Tommy Atkins*.

Attic Salt

"Attic salt" is a literary term for wit—especially for wit that is very delicately worded and well pointed. "His words were well seasoned with Attic salt," says a recent writer.

Salt was a common term for wit, both in Latin and Greek, and it was used to denote sparkling thought well expressed. Cicero used the expression. "Attic" means relating to Attica, the district in Greece containing Athens, and the Athenians were noted for their wit and elegant turns of thought. Hence, "Attic salt," or "Attic wit," means wit as pointed and delicately expressed as by the Athenians.

In general, the people of Athens were noted in the ancient world for their elegant literary and artistic tastes.

Augean Stables, Cleaning; see *Hercules' Labors*.

Augurs

An augur is one who foresees the future; an augury is a prediction or prophecy. Sometimes the word "augury" is used in the sense of "omen" or "presage."

The ancient Roman augurs used to make prophecies according to their observations of the flights of birds. One authority says that the first navigators, when out of sight of land, watched the flight of birds, as indications of the shore, and with no other guidance discovered many new islands. From this custom arose the practice of consulting the flights of birds before entering upon any important enterprise. It is said that the word "augur" came from the same root word as the Latin word "avis," meaning "bird."

Besides watching and explaining the flight and cries of birds, the augurs also explained other omens and signs, derived from the weather, the lightning and the observation of certain parts of animals.

Augustan Age

The Augustan age of any country is that period in which it reaches its highest development, and in which the arts and sciences flourish most abundantly. "Queen Anne's reign was much distinguished by its learning; it was a sort of Augustan age of English literature," says one critic.

"Augustan" refers to the Roman Emperor Augustus, whose name was originally Octavius. He was born in the year 63 B. C., and died in 14 A. D. As emperor, his course was wise and beneficent; literature and the arts flourished under his auspices; good laws were enacted, and he was in many respects worthy of the praises that have been heaped upon his name by the writers of his time and later periods. He was the son of a niece of Julius Cæsar, and the latter adopted him on the death of his father, which

happened when he was only four years old. The story of the life of Augustus is connected with all the great affairs of the period of Roman history in which he lived.

Ax to Grind

Everyone has met a man or woman who pretends to be very unselfish in seeking his ends and who keeps his real motives carefully hidden. Such a person is said to have "an ax to grind."

Benjamin Franklin tells of a man who had an ax that needed grinding, but had no one to turn the grindstone for him. He entered the yard where young Franklin was and by gross flattery induced the boy to turn the stone for him, telling him what a fine, manly little fellow he was, how big and strong for his age, how well he turned the handle, etc. The stranger kept the lad at work although the bell rang for school and the little fellow was afraid he would be late. When the ax was finely ground, the stranger turned on the boy and drove him away, saying:

"Be off, you young rascal! Did you not hear the bell ring for school?"

Bacchanalian

"Bacchanalian" means riotously jolly, when such merriment is caused by too much indulgence in liquor. The ancient Bacchanalia were festivals in Greece and Rome, and elsewhere in other places to which the influence of these lands extended. They were held in honor of Bacchus, god of wine, named for him.

In the old mythology, Bacchus was represented as a beautiful youth with black eyes; his golden locks, flowing in curls about his shoulders, are filleted with ivy. In peace his robe was purple; in war he was covered with the skin of a panther.

The Greek name for Bacchus was Dionysius. The French have a saying: "Bacchus has drowned more men than Neptune."

Backing and Filling

The nautical term, "backing and filling," has made a place for itself in non-nautical language to denote action which vacillates; a person who "backs and fills" will do now this, now the other thing, and cannot be pinned down to a definite decision.

Literally, the phrase "to back and fill" means to back and fill alternately the sails of a vessel so as to have her steer clear of obstructions in a stream and clear of the shore, until the current carries her downstream.

Used figuratively, the expression is encountered frequently in discussion of political matters. For example, a dispatch from Berlin said: "For many days the Nationalist chieftains had been backing and filling, and the Chancellor finally demanded that their tergiversation cease and they notify him formally whether they still supported his policies."

Backstairs Influence

"Underhand" work in advancing a cause, gaining influence or power, or acquiring office, and the like, is sometimes called "backstairs influence." It means gaining access to the "powers that be" by the "back stairs," not out in the open.

In the olden days, it was sometimes the custom to build royal palaces with a grand staircase for state visitors, and another, smaller and private, for those who sought the sovereign for interviews that could not be granted publicly. If anyone wanted a private audience with royalty it was highly desirable to conciliate those appointed to guard the back stairs, as they could admit or exclude a visitor.

Nowadays, of course, there are generally no back stairs, but those who have the private ear of a man in power, and can influence him are still said to possess and exercise "backstairs influence."

Bacon, *Saving One's*; see *Saving One's Bacon*.

Bagatelle

Probably every reader has seen or heard the expression a "bagatelle," or "a mere bagatelle," used to describe something of small value, either actually or in comparison with something else. "The few thousands that could be realized by sale would be a bagatelle in comparison with future values," said an editorial.

We get the word "bagatelle" from the French, and the latter took it from the Italian "bagatella," from "bagata," meaning a trifle. The French have two sayings, "He spends all his money on bagatelles," and "He amuses himself only with bagatelles." They use "Bagatelle!" also as an exclamation, similar in import to our English "Nonsense!"

The name "bagatelle" has been given to a game that is played with balls and a cue on an oblong board, having at one end cups, or cups and arches. There are several varieties of the game.

Baker's Dozen

A "baker's dozen" is thirteen, or one more than twelve, the usual dozen. Many years ago, in England, stringent laws were passed against the giving of short weight by dealers in bread. To avoid all risk of incurring the heavy fines and other penalties, bakers used to give a surplus number of loaves, or thirteen to the dozen. The extra loaf or loaves received the name of "inbread," and the thirteenth loaf was the "vantage loaf."

In one account it is related that "the thirteenth

loaf was the extent of the profit allowed to retail dealers, and therefore, the 'vantage loaf' means the loaf allowed for profit."

There is another use of the phrase, "baker's dozen." In old-time slang, "to give him a baker's dozen" meant to give him a good whipping—that is, all he deserves and one stroke more.

Baksheesh

"We laugh at the Oriental 'baksheesh,' but practically the same institution exists in countries that boast a higher civilization," says an editorial writer.

He meant that "graft," in one form or another, is widely prevalent, for "baksheesh" may be defined as "graft." One authority tells us that in certain Eastern countries as Turkey, Egypt, Asia Minor or Syria, the smallest service that is rendered to a traveler must be paid for with "baksheesh"—or, in other words, with a present or gratuity, or "tip."

Before the recent upheaval in Turkey it was said that ambassadors to the Sublime Porte (Turkey), on obtaining an audience from the Sultan or the high dignitaries, were obliged by the prompt gift of baksheesh to avoid a peremptory demand for it on the part of doorkeepers and other servants. By degrees baksheesh was fixed at a certain sum, but that was demanded loudly and even insolently.

Ballyhoo

The word "ballyhoo" is seen sometimes in the newspapers, especially on the sporting pages, in connection with prize fights. It means the "boosting" or "fuss making" over an important match, in order to arouse public interest and thus increase the box receipts.

"Ballyhoo," says the authority on words of the

Literary Digest, "is a contraction of 'ballyhooly,' which as a proper name designates a village east of Mallow in Cork County, Ireland. This village was long famous for its party fights, and to give or get ballyhoo was to berate or be berated." "Ballyhoo" as a noun has been said to be synonymous with "barker" in the slang sense of the word: "One who stands outside the entrance of the sideshows of a circus and attracts an audience by rather fictitious claims of the novelties within the sideshow. The 'barker' himself is sometimes called a 'ballyhoo,' as well as the speech or talk which he raucously declaims."

"The word 'ballyhoo' is also used as a substitute in such expressions as 'Go to Halifax,' 'Go to ballyhack,' 'Go to the dickens,' etc."

Balm in Gilead

To ask, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" means, "Is there no remedy, no consolation, not even in religion, for the evils that afflict us?" It is often asked ironically.

The saying comes from the Bible. In the Book of Jeremiah, eighth chapter, twenty-second verse, the prophet, lamenting over the sins and woes of his people, asks:

"Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then, is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

There is a tree that is known as "Balm of Gilead," or "Balsam of Mecca." It grows in Asia and Africa. It yields a balsam, from which are made an unguent and cosmetics that are highly valued by the Turks. Gilead is a district in Palestine to the east of the River Jordan.

Banagher, Beating; see *Beating Banagher*.

Band Box

When anyone is said to look as though he just came out of a band box, the implication is that he is so neat and precise, so immaculate in his appearance that he suggests some company dress, carefully kept in a band box.

The "Band Box Plot" occurred in Queen Anne's reign, when a band box was sent to the lord treasurer, with three pistols charged and cocked, the triggers being tied to a pack-thread fastened to the lid. It was expected that when the lid was lifted, the pistols would go off and shoot the person who opened the box. Dean Swift happened to be present at the time the box arrived, and seeing the pack-thread, cut it, thereby saving the life of the lord treasurer.

Barkis Is Willin'

When a person shows uncommon desire for something, the name "Barkis" is sometimes applied to him, together with the saying, "Barkis is willin'."

We owe this allusion, with so many others, to Charles Dickens. This one comes from his story, *David Copperfield*. One of the characters in the story is Mr. Barkis, a carrier, who is in love with Clara Peggotty, servant to Mrs. Copperfield, mother of David. Peggotty is nurse and friend to David himself.

Barkis asks young David whether Peggotty has any sweethearts. When the lad says "No," Barkis says, "If you was writin' to her, p'raps you'd recollect to say that Barkis was willin', would you?"

"That Barkis is willin'," I repeated innocently. 'Is that all the message?'"

"Ye—es," he said, considering. "Ye—es. 'Barkis is willin'.'"

Barmecide Feast

If you have ever been invited to a meal and have sat down to a table not sufficiently supplied with food, you know what is meant by a Barmecide feast, though it may be that you have never read the "Arabian Nights." The dictionary calls a "Barmecide feast" an "illusion of plenty," and another authority holds that it expresses "the uncertainty of things on which we set our hearts."

As related in the "Arabian Nights," a prince of the famous family of the Barmecides, in Bagdad, invited a beggar to a feast and offered him only imaginary dishes. At the same time the host pretended to partake of fine foods and enjoy them. The beggar, a good natured and sensible chap, fell in with the rich man's humor and made believe that he ate heartily. In the end the Barmecide, well pleased with the success of his joke, ordered a real and sumptuous feast for the beggar.

Barn, Robin Hood's; see *Robin Hood's Barn*.

Barnstorming

In reviewing a recent play, a dramatic critic said: "Fortunately for the leading man, the days of barnstorming are past, so that he need fear no exile to the provinces."

By "barnstorming" is meant the practice, now gone out of vogue save perhaps in very remote sections, of producing plays in barns, when theatres or halls or so-called "opera houses" were lacking. The wandering theatrical troupes, in their high-flown stage language, pretended that they took the barns by storm; hence the term "barnstorming."

It seems that the term is a pure Americanism, since it is defined in Webster's New International Dictionary, which is an American authority, and is

not to be found in standard British readers' handbooks and similar authorities.

Baron Munchausen; see *Munchausen*.
 Bashan, Bull of; see *Bull of Bashan*.

Battle Royal

It is generally said in the dictionaries and other works of reference that "battle royal" means a general conflict, a *mêlée*, in which large numbers of combatants take part. For example, a news dispatch says that the inmates of a poorhouse took part in a battle royal over political questions.

However, another meaning, and possibly a more correct one, is one that defines "battle royal" as being a sort of elimination contest. For example, a certain number of pairs of fighters, let us say eight pairs of pugilists, are pitted, one prizefighter against another. The eight winners are again paired and so on, until only one pair is left, and the winner of the final bout is declared the victor in the "battle royal."

There was at one time, and there may be still in some places, a barbarous custom of sending into a ring a number of prizefighters at one time, to fight in a mass until only one was left conscious or able to hold up his fists. This also was called a "battle royal."

Beachcombers

Readers of modern literature dealing with the Pacific or South Sea islands, such as the stories of Jack London, or persons who have seen plays or moving pictures with scenes in those islands, are familiar with the figure of the beachcomber. The term is applied to men in other parts of the world than the Pacific Islands who answer the description. There are beachcombers in Chinese and South American ports, as well as in other places.

One recent book calls beachcombers "lazy vagabonds who have deserted from ships to live the life of the savage natives." Generally, however, in literature they are more interesting than that. They may be beggars, living on the bounty of more affluent white men who visit their haunts, but they frequently have exciting stories to tell, and sometimes they are picturesque in appearance.

The word "beachcomber" has other meanings. The name is applied to a long, curling wave rolling in from the ocean, and in New Zealand it means a man who collects, legally or illegally, the flotsam and jetsam cast up by the sea.

Beam Ends

Being "thrown on one's beam ends" is one of the numerous figures of speech which the Americans and the English, seafaring and sea-loving peoples, have derived from the sea. It means to be reduced to the last extremity, or very nearly so. A ship is said to be "on her beam ends," or "thrown on her beam ends," when she is laid, by a heavy gale, completely on her beams or sides. Not infrequently the only means of righting the vessel in such a case is to cut away her masts.

The word "beam" figures often in sea language. A point on the starboard beam is a distant point out at sea on the righthand side (when one faces the bow), and at right angles to the keel of the ship. "On the port beam" means a similar point on the left-hand side. "On the weather beam" means on that side of the ship which faces the wind.

Bearding the Lion

"Bearding the lion"—more especially, "bearding the lion in his den"—means to defy personally or face to face. The reference is, of course, to the

idea of grasping the lion by the hair of his head, a very foolhardy thing to do. Scott, in "Marmion," wrote, "And dar'st thou, then, to beard the lion in his den, the Douglas in his hall?"

The expression "to beard," is also heard; it means to defy someone, to contradict him flatly, to insult him by pulling at his beard. Among orthodox Jews, no greater insult can be offered to a man than to pluck him by the beard, or even to lay a profane hand upon it. To tell someone something "to his beard," means to tell it to him directly in the face, without regard to consequences.

The Turks consider it a dire disgrace to have the beard cut off. Slaves who serve in the seraglios, or harems, have their beards shaved off, as a sign of their servitude.

Beating Banagher

"Well, that beats Banagher!"

The expression, an old one in the Emerald Isle, is still heard occasionally among persons of Irish extraction. It means "wonderfully inconsistent and absurd," or "exceedingly ludicrous." Sometimes, however, it expresses mere astonishment.

Banagher is a town of Ireland, on the River Shannon, in King's County. It formerly sent two members to Parliament, and was, of course, a "pocket borough"—that is, one of the places in which the seats in Parliament were carried in the "pocket" of a lord or noble family. When a member of Parliament spoke of a family borough in which every voter was a man employed by the lord and therefore subject to the lord's direction in casting his vote, it was not unusual for another M. P. to reply, "Well, that beats Banagher!"

There is a similar expression, "Well, that beats the Dutch!" for something that is truly astonishing.

Sometimes, when a person "draws the long bow" by telling something that is perfectly incredible, he is met with, "Well, that beats the Dutch!" or "Well, if that doesn't beat the Dutch!"

Beating the Air

"All this," says a writer of editorials, "is but mere beating the air. Why does not the Prime Minister come to grips with his critics, instead of dodging the issue?"

To "beat the air" means to strike out at nothing, merely to exercise the muscles, as pugilists do when they indulge in "shadow boxing." It means also to work without any definite aim, or without purpose, or to no profit. "Beating the air" is idle work.

It is an old phrase, and was used by the translators of the King James version of the Bible, that was produced at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter ix, verse 26, we find Paul the Apostle saying:

"I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air."

Beau Brummel

To win the reputation of being a "Beau Brummel" a man must be a leader of fashion, in manners, mode of dressing, etc. The original Beau Brummel was George Bryan Brummell, a noted man about town in London who lived about 1778 to 1840.

He was born in London and was educated at Eton and Oriel College, Oxford. A few years later, upon inheriting a fortune of about £30,000, he gave himself up to the pleasures of society in London. He attained notoriety for his taste in dress though that, while elegant and precise, was never extravagant.

For many years he enjoyed the friendship of the Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV, but they quarreled in 1813, and soon after Beau Brummel was forced to seek refuge in France, by heavy losses in gambling. He lived at Calais for fourteen years, and in 1830 was appointed British consul at Caen. A few years later the man who had been the leader of fashionable society in London for years sank into imbecility, and he died in the asylum of Bon Sauveur, at Caen.

Bedlam

It is strange that the name of the little town of "Bethlehem," which lives in the minds and hearts of men as the place of the nativity of Christ, should have been corrupted into a synonym for what is to many the most terrible of places, a mad house. Yet it is from Bethlehem that we get "Bedlam," which means "confusion worse confounded."

Bedlam (properly Bethlehem Hospital) is at the present time the London county lunatic asylum, but was originally founded in 1237 as a priory at Bishopsgate, under St. Mary's of Bethlehem. It was afterward converted into a mad house and transferred in 1676 to Moorfields, then in 1815 to Lambeth. At one time the inmates were treated in a terribly cruel manner, being exhibited as though they were wild beasts. A celebrated picture by Hogarth, English artist of the eighteenth century, depicts this.

Beer and Skittles

"He is likely to find, when he faces his opponent in the ring, that all is not beer and skittles in the boxing business," says a sporting writer.

When we say that "life is not all beer and skittles" we mean that it is not all eating, drinking and play;

not all pleasure, not all harmony and love. It has its duties, responsibilities and hardships. "Sport-like life, and life like sport, isn't all skittles and beer," says one rhymster, while another writer in a New Zealand paper said: "The life of a country parson in New Zealand is not all beer and skittles, if it be pardonable to use such a phrase in connection with the ministerial calling."

"Beer" needs no explanation, of course: "skittles" is an old English game similar to ninepins, in which wooden discs are shied or thrown at the pins.

Beersheba, see *Dan to Beersheba*.

Beggar on Horseback

A "beggar on horseback" is one, who, having risen to wealth and power, forgets his former poor state, and lords it over his less fortunate former associates. "There is no one so proud and arrogant as a beggar who has suddenly grown rich," says one authority on words and phrases.

"Set a beggar on horseback and he'll ride to the devil" is a very old saying, which varies in its form sometimes. Robert Greene, an English playwright who was a contemporary of Shakespeare, put it thus: "Set a beggar on horsebacke, they saie, and he will never alight."

The same idea, in various forms, is found in the literature and folk sayings of various nations. For example, the Spanish put it thus: "When a beggar is mounted on a mule, he knows neither gods nor men."

Begging the Question

To "beg the question" means to assume as true what you are supposed to prove, and then to proceed to argue from that point. For example, to say that parallel lines will never meet because they are paral-

lel, is simply to assume as a fact the very thing you profess to prove. The phrase, "begging the question," is a translation of the Latin phrase, "petitio principii." It was first used by Aristotle, the famous Greek thinker.

Begging the question is sometimes called "arguing in a circle." This kind of fallacy frequently occurs in long arguments and in verbose metaphysical writings. As the English writer on logic, Jevons, points out, it is an easy pitfall for those who employ a mixture of Saxon, Latin and Greek words in formulating definitions which on investigation turn out to be identical propositions.

Belial, Sons of; see *Sons of Belial*.

Bell Horse

Sometimes a man who leads the way, in politics or some other form of human activity, is referred to as a "bell horse." The term has persisted from the days when land carriage of goods was effected by pack animals slowly following out country paths. A pack train consisted generally of a number of horses and two men, one to lead the way and the other to close the rear.

The lead horse, the wisest of the train, wore a bell which jangled with every step, and the horses in the rear knew just enough to follow the bell, with another wise horse at the end to keep the laggards up to pace. From this use of the phrase it is applied, without a violent stretch of the imagination, to anyone in any employment who sets the pace for his fellows.

Belling the Cat

He who "bells the cat" takes it upon himself to run a great risk for the sake of his fellow citizens. The allusion is to the tale of the cunning old mouse,

who suggested that they should hang a bell on the neck of the cat, so that the mice should have due notice of her approach. "'Tis an excellent suggestion," said a wise young mouse, "but who is to put the bell on the cat's neck?"

"Bell the Cat" was a name given to a character famous in the history of Scotland, Archibald Douglas, Earl of Angus. The king, James III, had capriciously chosen several men of low degree as his favorites; one of them, a mason by trade, he made Earl of Mar. This gave great offense to the haughty members of the old nobility. The enraged nobles held a council for the purpose of devising means of putting down the upstarts. "But who will bell the cat?" inquired Lord Gray. "That will I," answered Douglas; and he sought out the hated newcomers and killed them in the very presence of the king. Thereafter he was known as "Bell-the-Cat Douglas."

Bells, Cap and; see *Cap and Bells*.

Belly God

The belly god is, of course, the deity worshiped by those who place the gratification of the appetite above all else. We get the expression from the New Testament; in Philippians, chapter ii, verse 19, we read of those "whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

"Truly, the belly is a great god, and the ancient Philippians not its only worshippers," says Rex Clements in "A Gipsy of the Horn." "Render it its proper oblations and it may thereafter be ignored, but pain and anguish are the lot of those who have not the wherewithal to appease it. It is a Rimmon to which all must bow, before passing on to other pursuits and subtler idolatries."

The "Rimmon" to which the author makes refer-

ence was an ancient Assyrian deity mentioned in the Old Testament. He was worshiped at Damascus, and was called sometimes the god of thunder and storm.

Below the Salt

To be assigned to a seat "below the salt" means that the person so seated is not regarded highly, that he is classed among dependents, inferiors or "poor relations." Conversely, of course, a seat "above the salt" is a mark of honor or distinction, of recognition as an equal.

The expressions "above the salt" and "below the salt" arose from an ancient custom of dividing the places, at a long table, by means of a large salt cellar, called a "saltfoot." Those who sat above were those whom the host "delighted to honor"; those who sat below were persons of minor quality.

In the novel, "Westward Ho!" by Charles Kingsley, which deals with the times of Queen Elizabeth, he writes: "We took him up above the salt and made much of him."

Belshazzar's Feast

One who indulges in a "feast of Belshazzar" does so in a spirit of "eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." The story of the "feast of Belshazzar" is told in the Bible, in the fifth chapter of the book of Daniel the prophet. In the next to the last verse we are told that "in that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." It was at that final feast of the king that there appeared on the wall the fateful writing that gave rise to the expression, "the handwriting on the wall."

Belshazzar, last king of Babylon of the Chaldean dynasty, was the son of Queen Nicotris. He per-

ished in the year 539 or 538 B. C. in the seventeenth year of his reign.

The story of Belshazzar has been a favorite subject of painters and writers; the painting of Belshazzar's feast by Martin and the dramas of Milman and Hannah More on this subject were formerly very well known.

Belvidere, Apollo; see *Apollo Belvidere*.

Benedick

A "Benedick" is a newly married man. The correct form is "Benedick," but "Benedict" is also used sometimes.

The reference is to the character named Benedick in Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing." The form "Benedict" is derived from the Latin "benedictus" (meaning blessed, or happy) and Shakespeare makes the name a joke or skit on the order of Saint Benedict. The members of the order are famous for their ascetic habits, and are bound rigidly to celibacy, or bachelorhood.

Shakespeare avails himself of a joke in making Benedick, the young lord of Padua, rail against marriage, but afterwards marry Beatrice with whom he falls in love.

"In brief, since I do propose to marry, I will think nothing to any purpose that the world can say against it," says Benedick in the final scene of the play.

Benefit of Clergy

Occasionally we still hear or read the phrase, "without benefit of clergy," although the law or custom to which it owed its origin was abolished, in England, almost a century ago. "So-and-so was condemned," we read, "without 'benefit of clergy.'"

This means that in the olden days, in England, if a person accused of crime could prove that he be-

longed to the clergy, he was held to be exempt from the processes of the civil courts, but could claim the protection of the church. As only the clergy could read, at one time, it followed that anyone who could read could claim "the benefit of clergy." It was enacted therefore that there should be a prerogative allowed to the clergy, that if any man who could read were to be condemned to death, the bishop of the diocese might, if he would, claim him as a clerk, and dispose of him in some place of the clergy as he might deem meet. This led in time to great abuses, and the law was modified from time to time to exclude persons guilty of great crimes, but it was not abolished until the reign of George IV.

Berserkers

In a recent editorial, a newspaper writer spoke of "the bellowing berserkers in the Senate and the House of Representatives."

The berserkers were men who figured in ancient Scandinavian tradition and folklore as warriors who fought like wild men when possessed by what was often called their "berserker rage." According to some accounts, they were believed to be able to assume the shapes of animals, especially the bear and the wolf, and they often wore the skins of these beasts. The berserkers howled like wolves or growled like bears and foamed at the mouth when enraged by the spirit of combat.

"Berserker" is also a name given in Scandinavian mythology to the twelve sons of the hero Berserk. They so terrified their enemies that they were regarded as possessed of an evil spirit.

Beulah Land

Beulah, or Land of Beulah, is the state which a Christian enjoys when his faith is so strong that

he no longer fears or doubts. The Sabbath, as a day or state, is sometimes called "Beulah." In "The Pilgrim's Progress," the pilgrims tarry in the Land of Beulah until their pilgrimage is over, when they are summoned to cross the stream of Death and enter the Celestial City. Bunyan says:

"After this I beheld until they came unto the land of Beulah, where the sun shineth night and day. Here, because they were weary, they betook themselves awhile to rest; but a little while soon refreshed them there; for the bells did so ring, and the trumpets sounded so melodiously, that they could not sleep. In this land they heard nothing, saw nothing, smelt nothing, tasted nothing that was offensive."

Reference to the land of Beulah is found in the Bible, in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, chapter lxii, verse 4.

Big Endians

"This strife between the two political parties, on a matter of very little importance to either, can be compared only to the famous quarrel between the 'Big Endians' and the 'Little Endians,'" said an editorial writer.

The author of the terms "Big Endians" and "Little Endians" was the famous Dean Swift, who introduced them in his "Gulliver's Travels," in describing Gulliver's experiences in the empire of Lilliput, the land of the little people.

The "Big Endians" were the members of a religious party in Lilliput, who made it a matter of conscience to break open their eggs at the big end; they were looked upon as heretics by the orthodox party, who broke their eggs at the small end.

It is well known, of course, that "Gulliver's Travels" is a satire on the life and times of Swift's days, when there was much acrimony between the Roman

Catholics and the Protestants. The critics declare that he intended the "Big Endians" to satirize the Catholics, and the "Little Endians" the Protestants.

Big Wigs

By "big wigs" are meant persons of much importance or consequence; but the term is used quite often as a jest, as in the sentence, "When the big wigs of the party meet next week, and give the matter the benefit of their gigantic intellects, there will be something of importance to record."

Louis XIV, in his early years, had long, flowing hair, and his courtiers, in compliment to the young French king, wore wigs, to imitate him. When Louis became older he adopted the wig, which very soon encumbered the heads and shoulders of the male members of the aristocracy of France and England.

Lord chancellors, judges and barristers in England still wear big wigs, and bishops wore them in the House of Lords until 1880. They were worn also in America in the eighteenth century. There was a great variety of wigs worn at one time, and we find as many as thirty or forty different names; among them were "the cut bob," "the Jansenist bob" and "the long bob." Naturally, the common people did not fail to imitate the aristocracy in adopting the fashion of wearing wigs.

Bird in the Hand

The famous old saying, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," embodies one of the most commonplace of our figures of speech. It is found, in one form or another, in the literature and folklore of many lands. The Italians say, "It is better to have an egg to-day than a hen to-morrow," and the French and Turkish express the idea in exactly the same way. The Germans say, "A bird in the hand

is worth ten over the land," and, "A sparrow in the hand is better than a stork on the roof."

The French vary the saying by "One 'you have it' is worth more than two 'you shall have it,'" and they say also, "A sou when one is certain of it is better than five that are hoped for."

As in many other cases, the opposing sentiment has also been embodied in everyday sayings. In English we have, "Nothing venture, nothing gain," and "Give a sprat to catch a mackerel"; in French, "Whoever does not take a chance will have neither a horse nor a mule."

Biting the Thumb

This expression, "Biting the thumb," is an ancient way of saying "insulting." When a writer of Shakespeare's day made one of his characters say to another, "Do you bite your thumb at me, sir?" he meant to have him say, "Do you mean to insult me, sir?" The expression is not much used nowadays; it has mainly a literary interest.

Long ago two ways of expressing defiance or contempt were by snapping the fingers or putting the thumb in the mouth. Both these acts were called a "fico," whence we derived our modern expressions, "Not worth a fig," and "I don't care a fig about it."

In Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," in the first scene of Act I, he makes Sampson, servant to Capulet, say:

"I will bite my thumb at them; which is a disgrace to them, if they bear it."

Bitter End

To see or follow a thing to the "bitter end" means to follow it to the limit, no matter what the consequences may be.

There has been some little literary controversy

over the origin of this phrase. Bartlett, the American authority on words and phrases, says that it is nearly without meaning as it is commonly used, and that the true phrase is "better end." When, in a gale, a vessel has paid out all her cable, it has run out to the "better end," the end which is secured within the vessel and is little used. Robinson Crusoe, in describing the terrible storm in Yarmouth Roads, says, "We rode with two anchors ahead, and the cables veered out to the better end."

However, Brewer, a high English authority in such matters, believes that "bitter end" is correct, and that its origin may be found in the Bible, in the fifth chapter of Proverbs, "Her end is bitter as wormwood."

Black Cap

Not long ago a newspaper, opposing a bill passed by Congress, advised the President to "put on the black cap and sentence it to death." The allusion was to the well-known custom in England, where a judge, before he condemns a criminal to the gallows, dons a black cap (now a three-cornered piece of black silk). Many American readers will have seen this action reproduced in moving pictures of English life.

The judge puts on the cap as a sign of mourning. This sign is very ancient. A similar custom is referred to in the Bible. In the Book of Esther, chapter vi, verse 12, we read: "Haman hastened to his house mourning, having his head covered." Of David we are told that he wept "and had his head covered." In ancient Greece, Demosthenes went home with his head covered when insulted by the populace. Darius covered his head when told of the death of his queen. Shakespeare does not miss referring to this; Malcolm says to Macduff (in "Mac-

beth," iv, 3), "What, man, ne'er pull your hat upon your brows."

Black Death

Referring to a flood of talk that almost inundated a political convention a newspaper writer spoke of "an epidemic of oratory, a Black Death of talk germs."

"Black Death" was the popular name conferred by the populace on a terrible sickness that raged in Asia, Europe and Africa in the fourteenth century. It took the name from the black blotches that appeared on the skin of its victims immediately after death.

This frightful pestilence was one of the worst that ever afflicted humanity. It is believed that 37,000,000 persons fell victim to it, while in the British Isles something like 1,500,000—that is, between one-third and one-half of the entire population—were mortally affected. The enormous mortality caused so great a scarcity of labor that wages rose to an unprecedented height.

Black Friday

Whenever there is a threat of financial depression in the United States, some one is likely to bring up memories of "Black Friday," so that the expression has become a synonym for a time of disaster. There have been three "Black Fridays" in history—two in England and one in the United States. The term was first used in England, and was applied to the Friday on which the news reached London that Charles Edward, the "Young Pretender" to the throne, had arrived at Derby, in 1745. The tidings created a terrible panic in London. The second English "Black Fri-

day" was on May 11, 1866, when the failure of Overend, Gurney & Co., bankers, led to widespread ruin.

The American "Black Friday" was in September, 1869, and was brought about by the attempt made by Jay Gould and others to corner gold. Men became insane from the stress, and everywhere the wildest excitement reigned, for it seemed probable that all business must stop on account of the ignorance on the part of merchants of the prices to be charged. But in the midst of the panic it was reported that Secretary of the Treasury Boutwell had eased the market by releasing \$4,000,000 in gold. It was said that Gould and his partners cleared \$11,000,000.

Blackguard

A blackguard is, according to Macaulay, "a man whose manners and sentiments are decidedly below those of his class." In common usage, a blackguard is a rascal or villain whose actions and language arouse contempt or anger.

The dictionaries do not cast much light on the origin of "blackguard," but other authorities infer that we get the word from the "black guards" or horse boys and other hangers-on of the old armies, such as cooks with their black pots, pans and other culinary utensils, who traveled with the army and greatly impeded its march.

In an early edition of Ben Jonson it is said that "in all great houses there were a number of dirty dependents, whose office it was to attend the woolyards, sculleries, etc. Of these the most forlorn were selected to carry coals to the kitchen. They rode with the pots and pans, and were in derision called the 'black guards.'"

Blackleg

A "blackleg" is a swindler, especially a gambler who resorts to dishonest measures to win, instead of trusting to "the luck of the game." It means, also, a "scab" or nonunion workman, or one who works for less than union pay. An English publication said, "The strikers are pledged not to return to work so long as a single blackleg is retained in the service."

Sometimes, but rarely, the word "blackleg" is used as a verb, as in the sentence from a newspaper: "They are working to overthrow the work of American labor in the cotton fields and elsewhere by coercing Indians, Chinese, Africans and Arabians and other denominated races to blackleg the rest."

The authorities on words and their uses throw no light on the origin of the word, but it may be conjectured that it gets its unpleasant meaning from the generally sinister significance attached to anything that is black—such as "black books," "black art," "blackguards," etc.

Blackmail

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the Scottish highlands, and part of the lowlands bordering on the highlands, were in a barbarous state, enjoying but little protection from the law. Theft and robbery were not then regarded as they are now; to carry off the cattle of a neighbor was perhaps only wreaking out an old family feud or clan dispute.

In these circumstances a class of men arose who proposed to take upon themselves the duty of protecting the property of individuals on the payment to them of a percentage of the rental value of the property, generally four per cent. This was known

as blackmail. The celebrated Rob Roy was a notable levier of blackmail.

Blackmail, in this sense, ceased to be heard after the breaking out of the rebellion under the "Young Pretender" in 1745, and the word gradually assumed its present significance—the extortion of money under threat of exposure to punishment or censure or disgrace.

Blarney

"Blarney" is flattery, or soft, wheedling talk, sometimes used innocently, sometimes for the purposes of deceit. It takes its name from Blarney Castle, in Ireland. A person who is accomplished in the use of such talk is said to have kissed the Blarney Stone, whether he was ever near the castle or not.

The Blarney Stone is a triangular stone suspended from the north angle of the castle, about twenty feet from the top. It takes strong nerves to stand being lowered to kiss the stone. The legend is that the castle was once besieged by an Englishman named Carew, Earl of Totnes. Having concluded an armistice with the commander of the castle on condition of its surrender, he was put off from day to day with soft speeches until he became the laughing stock of Queen Elizabeth's ministers and the Lord of Blarney.

Blest, Island of the; see *Island of the Blest*.

Blind Men's Dinner

The "blind men's dinner," to which reference is made occasionally in literature, is a dinner for which no one pays—that is, it is eaten at the expense of the landlord.

The story goes that Eulenspiegel, the famous German joker, being asked for alms by twelve blind

men, said: "Go to the inn; eat, drink and be merry, my men; and here are twenty florins to pay for the fare." The blind men thanked him, each one supposing that one of the others had received the money. Reaching the inn, they told the landlord of their luck, and were at once provided with food and drink to the amount of twenty florins. On his asking for payment, they all said, "Let him who received the money pay for the dinner." But none of them had received a penny.

Eulenspiegel, sometimes called "Til Eulenspiegel," was the hero of a German tale, which related the tricks and the ups and downs of a wandering cottager of Brunswick.

Bloody Shirt

"Waving the bloody shirt" means raking up old differences, bringing to mind wars and quarrels that had best be forgotten. The phrase was much used in the United States some years after the close of the Civil War.

In a speech made by Roscoe Conkling in New York in 1880, he said: "It is a relief to remember that this phrase, with the thing it means, is no invention of our politics. It dates back to Scotland, three centuries ago. After a massacre in Glenfruin, not so savage as has stained our annals, two hundred and twenty widows rode on white palfreys to Stirling Tower, bearing each on a spear her husband's bloody shirt.

"The appeal waked Scotland's slumbering sword, and outlawry and the block made the name of Glenfruin terrible to victorious Clan Alpine, even to the third and fourth generation." The "ensanguined garment" is a euphemious rendering of the now historic phrase, "bloody shirt."

Blue, True; see *True Blue*.

Bluebeard

Now and then there appears a monster who marries several women in succession, and murders them in turn. To such a man the name of "Bluebeard" is given, in commemoration of the character in the old tale who killed his wives and hid their bodies in a secret room. His end came through the unconquerable curiosity of his last wife, who opened the secret room and made the grewsome discovery. Bluebeard was killed by her brothers.

Some authorities hold that "Bluebeard" is none other than Henry VIII of England, who married six wives, four of whom he had beheaded. But Holinshed, the old English chronicler, says that a French nobleman, Giles de Retz, Marquis de Laval, was the original "Bluebeard." This Frenchman, who lived at Machecoul, in Brittany, was accused of murdering six of his seven wives, and was ultimately strangled and burnt in 1450.

Blue Blood

A "blue blood" is one who boasts of his aristocratic ancestry, and holds that in his veins runs blood that is blue and not the common red.

This conceit is traced to the Spanish. They are believed to hold that a person of pure Spanish ancestry—that is, one whose forbears were all Spanish, with no admixture of Moorish or Jewish—has veins that are bluer than those of persons of mixed and therefore, inferior ancestry.

It is well known, of course, that blue has always been a color held in high regard. According to some, it is the symbol of divine eternity and human immortality. "True blue" means thoroughly faithful and dependable.

Blue Laws

Everyone has heard, especially in recent years, of the famous "blue laws." According to Webster's New International Dictionary, blue has as one of its meanings "severe or over strict in morals," and the same authority says that the blue laws were "certain laws of extreme rigor alleged by the Rev. Samuel A. Peters, in his 'General History of Connecticut,' to have been enacted in the early days of the New Haven colony; hence, any puritanical laws. Formerly these laws were supposed to have been mostly maliciously invented by Peters, but nearly all of them have now been found in the New Haven statutes or in the works of one Neal, an earlier writer than Peters."

Another writer says, "In regard to the so-called 'blue laws' of Massachusetts, it is difficult to determine just where the line between fact and fancy is to be drawn."

Blue Moon, Once in a; see *Once in a Blue Moon*.

Blue Peter

To show or hoist the blue peter means to depart or to prepare for departure. The expression is a nautical term. The blue peter is a flag with a blue ground and a white square in the center, hoisted as a signal that a ship is about to sail. "Peter" is a corruption of the French "partir," meaning leave, or notice of departure. The blue peter is hoisted to give notice to the port that any person having a money claim against the ship or anyone on board may make it before the vessel leaves. It is also a notice to members of the ship's company on shore leave that they are to repair on board.

According to one authority on nautical terms, "peter" is a corruption of "repeater."

The term "blue peter" is used sometimes in whist to indicate a "call for trumps"; that is, laying on your partner's card a higher one than is required.

Blue Ribbon

To win the blue ribbon means to gain the highest honors or first class, as in a dog or horse show. The term is also used in connection with other forms of endeavor. For example, the French call a first class cook a "cordon bleu," which means a blue cord or ribbon.

The "blue ribbon of the turf" is the title generally conceded to the English Epsom Derby. It was conferred on the race by the Earl of Beaconsfield, the famous statesman. When Lord George Bentinck quit the turf for the House of Commons, he sold his stud of racing horses. On May 22, 1848, his protectionist resolutions were voted down in the House of Commons, and on May 24 one of the horses he had just sold, Surplice, won the Derby.

"All my life," he groaned, "I have been trying for this, and for what have I sacrificed it!" The sympathizing Beaconsfield in vain sought to console his friend. "You do not know what the Derby is," said Lord George. "Yes, I do," said Disraeli, "it is the 'blue ribbon' of the English turf."

Blue Stockings

A "blue stocking" is a woman who is devoted to books and learning and who loves to display her knowledge. There are two explanations of the term. One is as follows: The blue stockings were a society of literary ladies and gentlemen formed about 1400 in Venice. They were distinguished by the color of their stockings. From Venice the

society spread to Paris, in 1590, and thence to England, about 1780.

The other explanation is given more frequently. It tells us that in the eighteenth century the "blue stockings" were London coteries of men and women interested in literature, who met in the evening to discuss books and kindred matters. One of the best known and most popular members of one of these societies was a Mr. Stillingfleet, who always wore blue stockings. When he was absent it was said, "We can do nothing without 'Blue Stockings.'" The name gradually was applied to all clubs of the kind described, and finally only to the female members.

Boanerges; see *Sons of Thunder*.

Boats, Burning; see *Burning One's Boats*.

Bobtail, Rag, Tag and; see *Tag, Rag, and Bobtail*.

Boffins, Mrs.; see *Mrs. Boffins*.

Bogy Man

A "bogy man" is a bugbear, a scarecrow, a hobgoblin, something to frighten children with. It is sometimes used figuratively, as in a recent letter to a newspaper in which the writer mentioned "the childish bogy men of our national infancy."

The word "bogy" is sometimes spelled "bogie." It is said to be derived from a Welsh word, "bwg," meaning a goblin. From it we get, also, our English word "bugbear."

Since the very earliest ages, the various peoples of the earth have had their "bogy men" with which to scare their children into obedience. The Syrians used to threaten their children with the name of Richard Coeur de Lion; the Dutch with Boh, a Gothic general; the Jews, with Lilith; the Turks with Mathias Corvinus, the Hungarian king. After the victories of the Duke of Marlborough over the French, the mothers of France used his name as

that of a "bogy man." Some ignorant mothers in American cities use the policeman as a "bogy man" when they cannot bring their youngsters to obedience in any other way.

Bolt, Shooting One's; see *Shooting One's Bolt*.

Bonanza

Happy is the man who finds a "bonanza," for he has discovered a source of immense, if not inexhaustible, wealth. The "Bonanza Kings" were James C. Flood, W. S. O'Brien, John W. Mackay and James G. Fair, four men of Irish lineage who acquired vast fortunes from the gold and silver mines of the West. They had various imitators and successors who shared the name, but these four men are called the original "Bonanza Kings."

The word "bonanza" is Spanish, and means "calm, fair weather," or "prosperity." It is derived from the Latin word "bonus," meaning "good." In Matthew viii, 26, it is recorded that, after Christ rebuked the wind and the sea, "there was a great calm." If reference is made to the Spanish version of the New Testament, it will be found that the phrase there given is "una grande bonanza." It is easy to understand how the word came into its figurative use as meaning a happy calm and good hope after a weary search.

Bone, Picking a; see *Picking a Bone*.

Boniface

Another name for "mine host," a keeper of a hotel, inn or tavern, is a Boniface, especially when one wishes to describe a jolly, fat, hospitable inn-keeper such as one sees in old English prints.

The name comes from that of a landlord in "The Beaux' Stratagem," an old English comedy by

George Farquhar, an Irish comic dramatist, who was born in 1678 and died in 1707. The description of "mine host" in this comedy was so excellent that the term "Boniface" to describe a jolly innkeeper came into general use.

Some authorities say that the term is derived from an old legend which relates that Pope Boniface granted indulgences to those who should drink a cup of wine after grace, in his honor, or in honor of the Pope for the time being. The cup so drunk was called "St. Boniface's Cup," and those who desired an excuse for taking "just one more" sometimes invoke the memory of the Pope who favored such indulgence.

Boomerang

A boomerang is something that returns to worry or injure the one who sent it forth—as when a political candidate makes an ill-considered speech, and the statements contained in it are quoted against him with telling effect. Then the speech is said to prove a "boomerang."

We get the word from the famous weapon of the Australian aborigines, a missile made of wood, curved at an angle of between 90 and 120 degrees. It is between two and three feet long, and weighs about one-half pound. One side is flat, the other convex, and along the convex side runs a sharp edge. The arms have a skew, and upon the skew depends the return or non-return of the boomerang, for some are made not to return. After describing a circle of considerable diameter, the boomerang, after striking, returns to the thrower, and it has been known to return even after striking the ground. A skillful thrower can make the weapon travel over 200 yards.

Born to the Purple

The expression, "born to the purple," means born to a position of great wealth or exalted station. From a very early period of history, purple has been one of the most highly prized of all colors, and it came to be the symbol of royal power. Probably one great reason for this was the enormous cost of the only purple color known to the ancients, the Tyrian purple, which was obtained in minute quantities only from a Mediterranean species of shell-fish.

In the time of Cicero, wool that was double dyed with this color was so dear that a single pound cost a thousand denarii, or about \$175. Tarentum, the modern Otranto, was one of the great fisheries of the Romans, and vast heaps of the shell have been discovered there, the remains of its former industry.

With the decline of the Roman empire the employment of the ancient purple color ceased, and later it was found that a simple purple could be obtained from the lichen. Nowadays, our purple is made from aniline.

Both Sides of the Shield

A person who is disposed to be partial—that is, to see only one side of a question—is advised to "look at both sides of the shield."

We get the old saying from the story of two knights who came upon each other from opposite directions, and stopped in sight of a shield, one side of which was gold and the other side silver. Like the disputants about the color of the chameleon, the knights quarreled about the color of the shield, and from words were about to proceed to blows. Luckily, a third knight hove into sight at

this point, and the dispute was referred to him. He had the good sense to "look at both sides of the shield," and settled the dispute amicably.

"That depends upon which side of the shield you look at" means, "That depends on the standpoint of the speaker."

Bow of Ulysses

"It is not given to everyone even to try to bend the bow of Ulysses," said an editorial writer of a politician who assumed to take the place of a deceased statesman. The writer meant to repeat the ancient warning that one should not attempt a task that is manifestly beyond one's powers.

This Ulysses, whose bow one is warned not to draw unless one possesses extraordinary powers, was a Greek hero of much renown. He was a son of Laertes, king of Ithaca, and was husband of Penelope and father of Telemachus. He was distinguished above all the other Greeks at the siege of Troy for valor, craft and eloquence.

After the fall of Troy, Ulysses, on his way back to Ithaca, was beset by innumerable perils, and at length reached home after twenty years of absence. The tale of his wanderings is told in the famous "Odyssey," by Homer. ("Odysseus" was another name for Ulysses.)

Bowdlerize

To "bowdlerize" a book or a series of books means to delete carefully anything that might offend any reader. In the opinions of some critics of present-day literature, as embodied in magazines and books and on the stage, Mr. Bowdler would be quite busy today. However, he died in 1825.

His name was Thomas Bowdler, and he was an

Englishman. He issued an edition of Shakespeare which he called "The Family Shakespeare," from which he omitted "those words and expressions which cannot with propriety be read aloud in a family." This was in 1818. Later he applied the same process of purification to Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," with "the careful omission of all passages of an irreligious or immoral tendency."

The critics of his time, or many of them, failed to fall in with the ideas of Mr. Bowdler, and he was subjected to much ridicule. However, his activities in his chosen field served to add the words "bowdlerize," "bowdlerization," etc., to the English language.

Box of Pandora; see *Pandora's Box*.
Box, Wrong; see *In the Wrong Box*.

Boycott

The word "boycott," which is in common, everyday use, is a true "figure of speech," since it is based on a proper name. The origin of its figurative use was as follows:

A certain Captain Boycott was employed as an "agent" by an absentee Irish landlord. He was oppressive and overbearing in his dealings with the tenants, and they asked the landlord to appoint another agent. He refused, and they in turn refused to have any dealings with Boycott; in fact, they extended the "boycott," or policy of non-intercourse, to anyone who communicated in any way with the hated agent. If a man accepted work from Boycott his friends and neighbors treated him as an absolute stranger; no one was to buy from or sell to him, no one was to enter his house, no one was to recognize him in any way. The plan "worked" well; and since that time the word "boy-

cott," used as either a noun or a verb, has been a part of the English language.

Braggadocio

"A nation should not be suspected of braggadocio simply because it chooses to assert firmly its determination to protect the rights of its nationals," says an editorial writer.

Braggadocio is another name for boastfulness, and a braggadocio is a braggart, one who is very valiant with his tongue, but is a great coward at heart. Braggadocchio is a character in Spenser's "Faerie Queen." After a time Braggadocchio is stripped of all his glories; his shield is claimed by Sir Marinell; his lady is proved by the golden girdle to be the false Florimel; his horse is claimed by Sir Guyon; Talus shaves off his beard and scourges his squire; and the pretender sneaks off amid the jeers of the crowd.

It is believed that Spenser had in mind King Philip of Spain when he drew the character of Braggadocchio.

Branch, Olive; see *Olive Branch*.

Brand New

It may be said, first, on good authority that the proper form of the term used to describe something that is quite new and unused should be "brand new," and not "bran new," which we see so often. It is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word "brand," which means a torch.

Another form of the expression is "fire new," which is not much used nowadays, but was quite common in the times of Shakespeare. He used it several times; for example, in Richard III, in which

he wrote, "Your fire-new stamp of honor is scarce current."

The expression was applied originally only to metals and things of metal which glittered, as showing their recent coming from the fire. Subsequently, its use was extended to other materials.

Brass Tacks

"Let's get right down to brass tacks," says the man who wants to "talk business." Therefore, when you "get down to brass tacks" you "cut out" everything unnecessary or unrelated to the subject in hand. General Dawes, when candidate for vice president, said, "This is a campaign of brass tacks, not bombast."

Rossiter Johnson, well known author, explains the origin of the phrase as follows:

"In every store where dry goods are sold there are brass tacks in the edge of the counter, to indicate measurement of a yard, a half yard and a quarter yard. And probably they are used more often than any other measuring instrument. Therefore, it is good rhetoric for a disputant to say, "'Now, let us get down,' not to tacks in general, but 'to the brass tacks.'"

Bride of the Sea

Venice is sometimes called the Bride of the Sea since the ancient ceremony of the wedding of the sea by the doge, who threw a ring into the Adriatic, saying "We wed thee, O sea, in token of perpetual domination." This took place each year on Ascension Day, and was enjoined upon the Venetians in 1177 by Pope Alexander III. It was he who gave the doge a gold ring from his own finger in token of the victory achieved by the Venetian fleet at Istria over Frederick Barbarossa, in defence of the Pope's

quarrel. At the same time His Holiness desired that the dogs should throw a similar one into the sea on each succeeding Ascension Day, in commemoration of the event.

Bridge of Asses, see *Pons Asinorum*.

Bringing to Scratch

To bring a person "to the scratch" means to put him to the test, to find out "what he is made of." We get the expression from an old custom of the prize ring, when a line was scratched on the ground, and a fighter had to prove his mettle by "toeing the scratch." In like manner, a man who was properly courageous could be relied upon to "come up to scratch."

The word "scratch" has given several figures of speech to the English language. For instance, we sometimes hear the devil called "Old Scratch," as when a countrywoman says, "I think the Old Scratch is in the boy!" "Scratch" in this case comes from the Icelandic "scratti," an imp. A "scratch crew" or a team in a boat race, a ball game, etc., is one that does not row or play regularly together, but is "scratched" or gathered up for an occasion.

Brother Jonathan

"Brother Jonathan" means about the same as "Uncle Sam" as applied to Americans, and "John Bull" to Englishmen. That is, it is a collective name for the people of the United States.

When Washington, after being appointed commander of the American army, went to Massachusetts to take charge, he found that ammunition, clothing, and other needs of the soldiers were lacking. Jonathan Trumbull was Governor of Connecticut at that time and was known to be a man of excellent judgment. Washington placed great re-

liance upon him, and declared, at a council summoned to consider ways and means of raising the needed supplies for the soldiers, "We must consult Brother Jonathan upon the subject."

Governor Trumbull was successful in supplying many of the wants of the army, and when other and similar difficulties arose later, "We must consult Brother Jonathan" became a byword.

Brown Study

Everyone has been, at times, in deep thought—so deep that when one is roused the person who does the rousing is apt to be greeted by an expression of astonishment. To be so deep in thought is to be in a "brown study."

Dr. Brewer says that the expression "brown study" comes from the French, "sombre reverie." The words "sombre" and "brun" both mean, "sad, gloomy, dull." The English playwright Congreve, who wrote in the seventeenth century, used the expression in his "An Impossible Thing."

Some authorities profess to believe that "brown study" is really "brow study." But it is considered more probable that it is one of a group of similar phrases in which colors are employed to designate characteristics or temper; as, "black melancholy," "blue devils," "green-eyed monster," "yellow stockings," "blue stockings," "white feather," etc.

Bruce's Spider

To be as persistent as the spider of Robert Bruce denotes persevering even when there seems to be no hope of success. The saying is founded on the old story of Bruce and the spider.

In the spring of 1305, Robert Bruce was crowned king of Scotland, but, being attacked by the English, retreated first to the lands of Athole, and then

to the little island of Rathlin, off the north coast of Ireland. He was supposed to be dead. While lying hidden in the island, he one day noticed a spider near his bed try six times to fix its web on a beam in the ceiling. "Now shall this spider," said Bruce, "teach me what to do, for I also have failed six times." The spider made a seventh effort, and succeeded; whereupon Bruce left the island and in two years' time regained his throne.

Sir Walter Scott wrote that in remembrance of this incident, it has always been deemed a foul crime in Scotland for anyone of the name of Bruce to injure a spider.

Brummel, Beau; see *Beau Brummel*.

Bubble, Mississippi; see *Mississippi Bubble*.

Buccaneer

To "buccaneer" means to wage irregular warfare, especially on the high sea. A buccaneer is a sea robber, or pirate; sometimes a filibuster.

The original buccaneers were a celebrated association of piratical adventurers. From the commencement of the second quarter of the sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth, they maintained themselves in the Caribbean Sea, at first by systematic reprisals on the Spaniards, afterward by plain piracy.

Their name is derived from the West Indian word "boucan," meaning dried or preserved meat, smoke-dried in a peculiar manner. From this the French adventurers formed the verb "boucaner" and the noun "boucanier," which was adopted by the English. When the buccaneers were not hunting Spaniards, or being hunted themselves, their chief occupation and means of subsistence was the chase. They made their "boucan" from the flesh of wild cattle. The history embraces narratives of unsurpassed cruelty and bloodshed, but contains also

many stories of high and romantic adventure, of chivalrous deeds and brilliant generalship.

Buck, Passing the; see *Passing the Buck*.

Bucket, Kicking; see *Kicking the Bucket*.

Buckram, Men in; see *Men in Buckram*.

Bull, John; see *John Bull*.

Bull of Bashan

To "roar like the Bull of Bashan" means to make a lot of noise, like the bellowing of an angry bull. A sporting writer said recently of a racetrack follower: "He roars like the Bull of Bashan until the finish line has been passed."

The allusion to the Bull of Bashan is Biblical. Bashan was the name given to a fertile district east of the upper reaches of the River Jordan. The "Dictionary of the Bible" says: "Bashan was celebrated for its breed of cattle, which are also the types throughout the Old Testament of cruel and loud-mouthed oppressors; similarly, Amos calls the censorious and tyrannical matrons of Samaria 'kine of Bashan.'"

Bashan was a kingdom under Amoritish sovereigns. Og was the last king of the Amoritish dynasty. In the battle of Edrei, about the year 1452 B.C., the Israelites smote Og, with his sons, and all his people, until there was none left alive; and they possessed his land.

Buncombe

"Buncombe" is talk for effect—that is, talk that is not sincere. It may be said on good authority that "buncombe" is the original and authentic form of the word, but the spelling "bunkum" has come into use in recent years, and a still more common, abbreviated form is "bunk"—which is familiar, no doubt, to many readers.

The term "buncombe" grew out of an incident

that occurred in the early days of the Republic, in the sixteenth Congress. There was a member from North Carolina in whose district was included the county of Buncombe. The members were anxious to come to a vote on the famous Missouri question, but the man from Buncombe insisted on making a speech. Several representatives gathered about him and begged him to desist, but to all their entreaties he replied only that his constituents expected him to speak, and he was "bound to talk for Buncombe."

Burning One's Boats

To burn one's boats means to take a desperate resolution, to throw off all ties with the past, to cut oneself off from all means or hope of retreat.

In the ancient days, when conquering or marauding expeditions into enemy territory were common, and considered not at all reprehensible, a general invading a foreign country by sea drew up his boats on the beach and put the torch to them. This was to instill into his men the feeling that no retreat was possible. Before them were the foemen, behind them the unrelenting sea. Nothing was left but to advance into the enemy country and conquer, or die.

Among the generals who resorted to this means to encourage their men was Julius Cæsar. His action in invading his own country in disregard of the law has given rise to another expression, "crossing the Rubicon."

Burying the Hatchet

Making peace, and "letting bygones be bygones," is called, sometimes, "burying the hatchet." The phrase is of Indian origin.

The Indians believed that when the Great Spirit commanded them, as they smoked the calumet or

peace pipe, to bury their hatchets, their scalping knives and their war clubs, all thought of renewal of hostilities should be buried out of sight.

In Longfellow's poem of Indian life, "Hiawatha," he writes;

"Buried was the bloody hatchet;
Buried was the dreadful war-club;
Buried were all warlike weapons,
And the war cry was forgotten;
Then was peace among the nations."

"It is much to be regretted that the American government, having brought the great war to a conclusion, did not bury the hatchet altogether," said the London "Times," commenting on the close of the Civil War.

Butterfly on the Wheel

Making a great offense of what is only a small infraction of law, and visiting condign punishment upon a slight offender—in other words, magnifying an offense beyond reason—is called, sometimes, "breaking a butterfly upon the wheel." It may mean, also, using too much effort in the accomplishment of a small matter.

When one reads what a terrible punishment "breaking on the wheel" was, one can see readily the absurdity of "breaking a butterfly upon the wheel." Breaking on the wheel was a barbarous mode of inflicting capital punishment, formerly in vogue in Germany and France. It consisted in stretching the offender upon a wheel or upon a wooden frame in the shape of an "X" or St. Andrew's cross, breaking his limbs with blows of an iron bar, and permitting him to die slowly from fever, thirst and exhaustion. Sometimes, when more merciful notions prevailed, the sufferings of the

victim were ended by a "coup de grâce," a blow upon the chest. (See Coup de Grâce.)

Buttons, Soul Above; see *Soul Above Buttons*.

Buzfuzery

"The danger lies in thinking that the Buzfuzery of the law is an important part of the law," says an editorial writer. By "Buzfuzery" he meant the tendency on the part of some lawyers to spin out technicalities, to insist on the letter of the law while ignoring its spirit and the intent of the lawmakers.

Sergeant Buzfuz (in Dickens' "Pickwick Papers") is the pleader retained by Dodson and Fogg for the plaintiff in the celebrated case of "Bardell versus Pickwick." He is a bullying lawyer who browbeats Mr. Pickwick's witnesses in the breach-of-promise case. He proved that Mr. Pickwick's note about "chops and tomato sauce" was really a declaration of love; and that his reminder "not to forget the warming pan" was only a cover for an expression of his affection.

"Dickens," said a New York lawyer, "did not dislike lawyers, but he had a contempt for some lawyers, and that was why he wrote 'Bleak House.' And he wrote the character of Sergeant Buzfuz in the hope that he would eliminate from the English bar the shysters that indulge in deceptions upon juries." ("Sergeant" is not in this case a military title; it denotes an English barrister of the highest rank.)

By and Large

"In such a sentence as 'Consider the question by and large,' the expression 'by and large' has the meaning of 'in all respects,' 'in its fullness,' or perhaps in a single word, 'comprehensively,' said 'The Lexicographer' in 'The Literary Digest.'

"The figurative use, 'in all ways, directions or respects,' originated with Edward Ward, an English humorist of low extraction, who was born in Oxfordshire, England, in 1667. He introduced it in his work, 'The Wooden World Dissected,' issued in 1707. Its primary use, applied to the sailing of a vessel and meaning, 'to the wind (within six points) and off it,' dates from 1669, and has been traced to Sturney's 'Mariner's Magazine,' where there occurs, 'You see the ship handled in fair weather and foul by and large.' This use occurs frequently in English literature."

By Heck!

Lots of men use the favorite expletive, "By heck!" without knowing that in so doing they are making an allusion to classical literature. The origin of the term is explained thus by "The Lexicographer" in "The Literary Digest":

"The origin of the expletive, 'By heck!' may be traced to a corruption of 'By Hector!' a favorite in classical literature and re-introduced by the literati of the Elizabethan period. Or it may be a corruption of 'By Hecate!' the goddess of the underworld. Both Hector and Hecate have been invoked upon occasion, but the first more frequently because of his many excellent qualities. He is one of the noblest figures of antiquity, and the chief hero of the Trojans in the famous siege of the city of Troy. 'As husband and father his character was not less admirable than as warrior,' says one writer of Hector."

By Hook or by Crook

The phrase, "by hook or by crook," means "by any means, direct or indirect." In Marsh's Library,

Dublin, is a manuscript entitled "Annales Hiberniæ," written in the seventeenth century by Dudley Loftus. In this it is written:

"1172. King Henry the Second landed in Ireland this year, on St. Luke's eve, at a place in the Bay of Waterford, beyond the fort of Duncannon, on Munster side, at a place called the Crook, over against the tower of the Hook; whence arose the proverb 'to gain a thing by hook or crook'; it being safe to gain land in one of those places when the wind drives from the other."

There is, however, another and more probable origin of the term. Anciently the poor of a manor were allowed to go into the woods to gather dead wood; they were allowed to cut off dead branches with a bill hook, or to pull down by means of a crook any dead branches that otherwise would be beyond their reach.

Byzantine Luxury

By "Byzantine luxury" is meant a very lavish display of wealth and magnificence. It is almost equivalent to saying "barbaric display."

It refers to the Byzantine empire, the Roman Empire of the East, which was established when the old Roman Empire broke in two. Byzantium was the ancient name of Constantinople, the capital of the empire, the latter name being derived from the Emperor Constantine the Great, and meaning "the city of Constantine."

As a separate power the Byzantine Empire began its existence in 395 A.D., when the Emperor Theodosius the Great died, bequeathing the Roman Empire to his two sons, who divided it. Arcadius took the eastern part, with his capital at Byzantium. It was a rich and powerful sovereignty, and its luxury became proverbial, for ten centuries, until

it succumbed to the power of the Moslems, under Mohammed II, in 1453.

The Byzantine Empire was called also the Greek empire, and it was the home and head of the Greek Orthodox church.

Ca' Canny

"Ca' canny" means "go easy." It is a Scottish expression that made its way recently into the language of economics, in the discussion of the relations between labor and capital. "The method of 'ca canny,'" said the "Literary Digest" in reply to a query, "is adopted by workmen for the purpose of bringing pressure on the employers when, in the workmen's opinion, a strike would be hardly justifiable, expedient, or possible." The workmen who adopt the policy of "ca' canny" do what is known in slangy language as "laying down on the job."

The word "ca'" is an abbreviation of "call," according to Webster's New International Dictionary; "canny," says the same authority, means "in a canny manner; cautiously; carefully; gently; quietly; especially in the phrase 'ca' canny.'"

"Ca' canny" is used more generally in the British Isles than it is in the United States, but its use is not uncommon on the American side of the water.

Cad

Our word "cad," meaning a low, ill-bred person, one who acts in contravention of the rules of good society, or makes himself obnoxious to others, is derived from the Latin word "cadaver," which is found in English also as a synonym for a corpse. In the old-time slang of the universities in England, men were divided into two groups, those who were members of the university, and those who were not.

As the former are called "men," the latter must be no men; but as they bear the human form, they must be human bodies (cadavers or cads) though not human beings (men).

Another authority derives "cads" from "cadets," the younger sons of the nobility. Younger sons were, and are, no doubt, looked down upon with something like contempt by their older and richer brothers. Hence there used to be a remark, "Oh, he's only a cad!" meaning, he's only a cadet, having no property, and therefore not worthy of notice. When omnibuses were first introduced into England, the conductor was sometimes known as the "cad." In Dickens' earlier works the word is used frequently in this sense, but Thackeray, who was Dickens' contemporary, used it in the sense of a low person, as we do now.

Cæsar's Wife

Anybody that is beyond the reach of slander, or even suspicion of wrongdoing, is said to be "like Cæsar's wife, above suspicion." This phrase, according to Plutarch and other writers, had its origin in a story concerning Pompeia, wife of Julius Cæsar, and Publius Clodius, a Roman nobleman. They had a love affair, but he could not meet her without danger, so he contrived to gain access to the sacred rites or mysteries of Bona Dea (the "good goddess"), from which men were rigorously excluded. Pompeia assisted in these rites. In his intrusion Publius Clodius was dressed, of course, in women's clothing.

He was discovered and driven out. The affair caused great commotion in Rome. Pompeia was divorced by Cæsar, but when Clodius came up for trial Cæsar declared that he knew nothing of the affair. Being asked why, then, he had divorced his

wife, he answered "My family should be not only free from guilt, but even from the suspicion of it."

Cake, Taking the; see *Taking the Cake*.

Calvary, see *Golgotha*.

Candle, Holding; see *Holding a Candle*.

Cap, Black, see *Black Cap*.

Cap, Feather in, see *Feather in Your Cap*.

Cap—If the Cap Fits; see *If the Cap Fits*.

Cap and Bells

To wear the "cap and bells" means to play the jester; it is an expression used sometimes to describe someone who is the butt of the company, or who excites laughter at his own expense. The reference is to the recognized jesters formerly attached to the courts of sovereigns, and to the households of noblemen. Their headgear was a cap to which bells were attached. Thackeray says, "One is bound to speak the truth, whether he mounts the cap and bells or a shovel hat." The "shovel hat" referred to was the mark of a bishop.

There is an old Latin saying, "as the fool thinks, so the bell clinks," meaning, "A foolish person believes what he desires." The old-time jesters were very often jugglers. There is an old saying, "Every man has a fool in his sleeve," meaning that no one is always wise.

Capitol, Geese at; see *Geese at the Capitol*.

Carpet, Magic; see *Magic Carpet*.

Carpet Baggers

Carpet baggers are those adventurers who, carrying all their possessions in a carpet bag or its equivalent, go to a country or a place to exploit it. The term is one of contempt.

The foregoing is a general definition of the term. Specifically, the "carpet baggers" were the corrupt and often ignorant politicians from the North who flocked to the South during the era of reconstruction.

They were uniformly "on the make," and were responsible for much of the venality and rascality that disgraced that period in the history of the South.

In 1877 the "North American Review" said: "Some of them (the carpet baggers) were the dregs of the Federal army, the meanest of the camp followers; the best of them were those who went down after the peace, ready for any deed of shame that was safe and profitable. By force or fraud, they either controlled all elections, or else prevented elections from being held."

Carpet Knight

A "carpet knight" is one who seeks to win the favors of ladies, or recognition by a sovereign, by services in the civilian field, rather than by risking the perils and hazards of the battlefield. Hence, the term was applied contemptuously to knights who enjoyed ease and luxury, shirking a soldier's hardships. Nowadays, it means a "drawing room hero," a stay-at-home soldier or an effeminate man.

Mayors, lawyers and other civilians winning the distinction of knighthood elsewhere than on the field of battle were, and are, knighted while kneeling on a carpet in front of their king. In Froude's life of Cæsar he writes: "The subordinate commands fell to young patricians, 'carpet knights' who went on campaigns with their families and slaves." Sir Walter Scott speaks of "some vain carpet knight, whose best boast is but to wear a braid of his fair lady's hair."

Caste of Vere de Vere

In his poem, "Lady Clara Vere de Vere," the English poet Tennyson speaks of someone whose "manners had not that repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere," and the writer of a society

column recently told of "those bearing the imprimatur of fashion and boasting of the golden caste of Vere de Vere."

A person who has the manners of a Vere de Vere is a thoroughly cultured and polished lady or gentleman. He or she is trained in all the usages of good society, is never at loss for knowledge of the proper action in any situation and is, in short, well bred.

The family of De Vere stands high in the history of the English peerage, and formerly held, among other honors, the earldom of Oxford. It was one of the Norman families that "came over" with William the Conqueror, and in former days held vast estates in England and in Ireland. The family numbered among its members many courtiers, statesmen, soldiers and poets, as well as holders of titles in the peerage.

Castles in Spain

We are all architects—of castles in Spain. They are the places "where dreams come true." They are in the happy land of make-believe, to which we transport ourselves when we weary of our labors and when "the world is too much with us." All will be right with us when we take up our permanent residence in our "castles in Spain."

But "building castles in Spain" has another meaning. It signifies indulgence in vain and idle projects, deceiving ourselves or others or both. One may build "castles in Spain" with an evil intent.

Castles in Spain are called sometimes "castles in the sky," or "in the air." In the middle ages one was said, in a similiar sense, to erect "castles in Asia." The French form, sometimes used, is "chateaux en Espagne."

Cat, Belling the; see *Belling the Cat*.

Catching a Tartar

To "catch a Tartar" means to attack someone who gives back more than he receives; that is, who puts up an unexpectedly stiff fight.

The phrase is said to have had its origin in the olden days, when the soldiers of Europe were often engaged in fighting the Turks, who were sometimes called Tartars. A soldier in a battle against the Turks called out to his commanding officer that he had "caught a Tartar." "Bring him along, then," said the officer. "But he won't come," was the reply. "Then come along yourself." To which the soldier answered, "And so I would, but he won't let me."

Readers will be reminded of the old tale of the American pioneer who tackled a bear and couldn't let go, and told a bystander that wasn't sure whether he had caught the bear or the bear had caught him.

Catchpenny

A "catchpenny" is a worthless article, "made to sell," and to coax the pennies from the pockets of the unwary. Everyone who has stopped in the streets of a large city to listen to the sales talk of the street "fakers" has seen examples of "catchpennies."

It is said that the term originated in London about a century ago. The murder of a man named Weare had attracted much attention and Catnach, a well known printer of that day, had printed and sold a large number of copies of the "last dying speech" of Thurtell, the murderer. When the sales fell off, Catnach got out another edition, headed "We Are Alive Again." He printed it with a very small space between "We" and "Are," so that it looked like "Weare Alive Again." Of course, many copies were sold; but someone called the production a

"catchpenny," and the term has become part of the language.

Cat's Paw

"He can't make a cat's paw out of me; let him do his own dirty work," was a remark overheard not long ago on the street. The indignant speaker meant that he was not to be made the tool of another, the means of doing another's "dirty work."

The allusion is to the old fable of the monkey who wanted to get from the fire some roasted chestnuts and took the paw of the cat to get them from the hot ashes. "I had no intention of becoming a cat's paw to draw European chestnuts out of the fire," wrote the American Commodore Rodgers.

The term "cat's paw" has another meaning, in sailors' lingo. At sea, a light air during a calm, causing a ripple on the water, and indicating the approach of a storm, is called by sailors a "cat's paw," and seamen affirm that the frolics of a cat indicate a gale.

Cats, Kilkenny; see *Kilkenny Cats*.

Cats and Dogs, Raining; see *Raining Cats and Dogs*.

Caviar to the General

Anything that is "caviar to the general" is considered beyond or above the common taste or comprehension—"general" meaning the generality or "common run" of humanity. We owe the phrase to Shakespeare, who uses it in "Hamlet," second act, second scene, in which the Prince of Denmark says, "The play, I remember, pleased not the million; 'twas caviar to the general."

Caviar is the roe of the sturgeon prepared for eating. To those who can acquire a taste for it, it is a favorite hors d'œuvre, or appetizer. Owing to the scarcity of the sturgeon, caviar is very costly,

and sometimes the roe of other fish is used; but true caviar is made from the eggs of the sturgeon only. Caviar has long been a favorite dish among wealthy Russians, especially a variety known as "ikra," which is loosely granulated and almost fluid. The reference to caviar in "Hamlet" proves, of course, that it was a known delicacy in Shakespeare's day.

Celestial Kingdom

The name "Celestial Kingdom" or "Celestial Empire" still clings to China, although that country is no longer an empire. It is a very old designation, and dates back to the time when the Chinese asserted that their rulers were of celestial or divine origin. The same claim is made for the ruling family of Japan. In all countries, in the dawn of history, the kings were the sons of the gods, according to popular belief. Æneas, who went from Troy and found Rome, is declared to have been the son of Anchises and Aphrodite (Venus).

Early Chinese literature contains no trace of any tradition on which a theory might be founded as to the original source of the "Celestial Empire." The Chinese have their own traditions as to the history of the human race and its origins, and they show no signs of any migration. After the time of Pan-ku, the first man, they tell of ten periods of sovereigns, of dynasties, to the reigns of whom most of the great advances in civilization and culture are assigned.

Celibate

A celibate is a person of either sex who remains unmarried, and the name is applied sometimes to a confirmed bachelor or spinster, one who has taken vows never to marry. The word is Latin in its

origin, and is derived from the Latin "caelebs," meaning unmarried.

More than a hundred years ago Hannah More, an English novelist whose works enjoyed considerable popularity, but which are now forgotten, published a story entitled "Coelebs in Search of a Wife." In it she depicted a young man seeking, and eventually finding, a wife who was equal to his mother's ideal of a fitting mate for her son.

The name "Coelebs" is now applied sometimes to a bachelor who seeks a wife, and "Coelebs' wife" means a bachelor's ideal of a wife.

Chalk, Long; see *Not by a Long Chalk*.

Chance, Chinaman's; see *Chinaman's Chance*

Chancery

Sport writers use plenty of figurative language, but as a rule they do not go to the law for their figures of speech. However, one of them, writing not long ago of a baseball game, said that the pitcher "had the opposing batters in chancery from start to finish."

Of course, he meant that the batters could not solve the pitcher's delivery. But why "in chancery"? He got his figure of speech not directly from the law, but from the prize ring. A boxer is said to have his opponent in chancery when he has the other fellow's head tucked under his arm, so that he can hit it as he pleases. A fighter who is in chancery is helpless—and so we come to the derivation of the term, since a man whose estate is involved in a court of chancery is certain of cost and loss, no matter what the outcome of the legal proceedings may be.

Charivari

The people of the big cities do not know, as a rule, what a "charivari" or "shivaree" is, but there are

still some corners of America in which the charivari is known.

It means a mock serenade, by means of tin pans, kettles, rattles, horns and other instruments of noise. Sometimes it is goodnatured, as when neighbors assemble to welcome home a newly married couple. At other times the charivari has its origin in malice, as when it is desired to express disapproval of an elderly man taking a young bride. "In certain country districts," says one authority on unusual names and phrases, "a relic of the charivari is still in vogue, known under various local appellations, as 'hornings,' etc., in which the newly married couple are treated to a serenade of fish horns, drums, guns, bells, etc., but not always indicating dislike or disapprobation. This continues until the groom makes his appearance and entertains his self-invited guests."

Charlatan

A "charlatan" is, in the language of the day—which will, no doubt, be understood by most readers—a "faker." We get the word "charlatan," according to some authorities, from a Frenchman named Latan, who was a notorious quack and tooth puller in Paris a hundred years or so ago.

M. Latan used to go about Paris in a gorgeous car, in which he had a traveling dispensary. A man blowing a horn announced the approach of his master, and the delighted sightseers of the city used to cry out, "Voila le car de Latan!"—that is, "Here comes Latan's car!"

Sometimes the man laid down his horn to play the drum. The "fake" doctor, dressed in a long robe, wore sometimes a hat with feathers, and sometimes a showy cap. It is very probable that the name "Latan" was assumed, since the Italian lan-

guage has a word "ciarlatano," meaning a babbler or quack.

Charybdis, see *Scylla and Charybdis*.

Chase, Wild Goose; see *Wild Goose Chase*.

Chaste as Diana

This figure of speech, "chaste as Diana," has long been a favorite with poets, with whom the huntress goddess is a favorite. The numerous legends associated with her name have afforded the writers of verse much material. She is the patroness of chastity, and all her handmaidens are virgins.

Diana is an ancient Italian goddess, identified by the Romans with the Greek goddess Artemis. She was the goddess of the moon and light generally, and the protectress of slaves, because her worship was introduced into Rome by the plebeians. Diana is sometimes called "the huntress," and is represented with bow and arrows. Other names for her are Phœbe and Cynthia. There was a magnificent temple to her at Ephesus; it is generally included among the "seven wonders" of the ancient world.

Chateaux en Espagne; see *Castles in Spain*.

Chauvinism

"Chauvinism" means blind devotion to one's country, carried to such excess that one is unable to see whatever faults may exist therein. It is loyalty carried to an absurd extreme.

The name is derived, according to some authorities, from that of Nicholas Chauvin, of Rochefort, in France, who was an old soldier of Napoleon I, and was so wildly demonstrative in his praise of his imperial master, and all of his policies, that the veteran became an object of ridicule even to his friends.

But some say that Chauvin was not a real character at all, but merely the principal rôle in a

French comedy which was played with immense success in Paris at the time of the restoration of the king. "To have a generous belief in the greatness of one's country is not chauvinism," says one writer. (See also "Jingoes.")

Cheating the Devil

There have been many men who believe that they could "cheat the devil"—that is, follow their own evil inclinations, especially in regard to gaining money unlawfully, and then compromise with their consciences by giving part of the profits to the church, etc.

Longfellow, in his "Golden Legend," retells a familiar story: The devil agreed with the Abbot Giraldus of Einsiedel to build a bridge over the fall of the River Reuss on condition that he should have the first living thing that crossed the bridge after it was finished. When the bridge was completed the abbot threw a loaf of bread across it, a hungry dog ran after the bread, and the devil was cheated of his prey. There is an old story from Talmud, in which it is related that a man made a compact with the devil. The terms were that the man and the devil were each to have in alternate years what grew under and over the soil. The canny farmer sowed carrots and turnips when it was his turn to have the under-surface crop, and wheat and barley in the following year.

Chestnut

Probably everybody knows what a "chestnut" is, but the origin of the term may not be known. There are, in fact, various stories to tell why a stale joke, an oft-repeated tale, is called a "chestnut." Here is one of the best known:

In "The Broken Sword," an old melodrama by William Dillon, Captain Xavier is forever telling the same joke, with variations. He was telling about one of his exploits, connected with a cork tree, when Pablo corrected him. "A chestnut tree, you mean, captain." "Bah!" replied the captain, "I mean a cork tree." "A chestnut tree," insisted Pablo. "I must know better than you," said the captain; "it was a cork tree, I say." "A chestnut," persisted Pablo; "I have heard you tell the story twenty-seven times, and I am sure it was a chestnut."

Chevalier of Industry

By "chevalier of industry"—which is printed sometimes in its French form, "chevalier d'industrie"—is meant a man who lives not by industry, but without it; that is, a man who lives by his wits, while pretending to be a gentleman. Honest work is foreign to his nature. The word "chevalier" is French and means "knight."

In an old French novel there is this description of a "chevalier d'industrie":

"He is a hunter of birds' nests, one who goes about seeking some soft nest for himself, some woman who will leave him her fortune."

In a recent book review the expression "chevalier d'industrie" was used as though it meant a common thief, but this is not quite correct. The reviewer said, "The first evening he preached in the street, a 'chevalier d'industrie' succeeded in depriving him of his worldly goods."

Chickens, Mother Carey's; see *Mother Carey's Chickens*.

Chinaman's Chance

Just how or why "a Chinaman's chance" came to have its current meaning of no chance at all, is somewhat of a mystery, on which the reference

books cast no light. But the phrase is employed in that sense frequently; not long ago one of the best edited papers of the United States said, in an editorial, "How can pedestrians cross the streets carefully when they don't have a 'Chinaman's chance'?"

It is conjectured that the phrase may have had its origin in the old mining days in the West, when and where the Chinese, being in a hopeless minority, had no chance at all—that is, "a Chinaman's chance," if caught in any infraction of the law. Bret Harte's "heathen Chinese" had that kind of a chance.

(Incidentally, it may be said that educated Chinese object to the term "Chinaman." They prefer to be known as "Chinese.")

Chinese Wall

Some years ago M. Tchitcherin, a leading statesman of Soviet Russia, declared that "life itself imperatively demands that the Chinese Wall erected between America and Russia should be pulled down."

By "Chinese Wall" the Russian meant an insurmountable barrier, and in this sense the term is found frequently.

The Great Wall of China was built to protect China from the inroads of nomadic Tartars, about 200 B.C. This marvelous work extends over the mountains and rivers for more than 1400 miles. The main substance of the wall is earth or rubbish, retained on each side by a strong casing of stone and brick, and terraced by a platform of square tiles. It commences at the Gulf of Liao-Tang, whence it extends westward to the Chia-yu barrier gates. The workmanship gradually deteriorates. The thickness of the wall at the base is often as much as twenty-five feet.

Choice, Hobson's; see *Hobson's Choice*.

Cimmerian Darkness

"Cimmerian" means gloomy, or shrouded in darkness. The term comes from classical antiquity, and refers to a people, called the Cimmerians, who dwell beyond the ocean stream in a land where the sun never shines and where the blackest darkness always prevails.

"The Cimmerian country is the abode of the dull god, Somnus," says Gayley's "Classic Myths." "Here Phoebus dare not come. Clouds and shadows are exhaled from the ground, and the light glimmers faintly. The cock never there calls aloud to Aurora, nor watch dog nor goose disturbs the silence. No wild beast, nor cattle, nor branch moves with the wind, nor sound of human conversation breaks the stillness. From the bottom of the rock the river Lethe flows, and by its murmur invites to sleep. Poppies grow before the door of the cave, from whose juices Night distills slumbers, which she scatters over the darkened earth."

Cincinnatus

Comparing a man with Cincinnatus, or calling him a Cincinnatus, means paying him a sincere compliment, since the name is a synonym for disinterested, unselfish patriotism.

Cincinnatus, the Roman, a famous figure in the early history of his country, was plowing his field when he was called upon to take command of the Roman army and deliver his country from the Volscians. Having overcome the enemy, he put aside ambition, and returned to his field. This happened, according to a legend which is not wholly credited by modern historians, about 485 B.C.

Washington is called sometimes the "Cincinnatus of America," or "the Cincinnatus of the West," and

the latter name was applied also to William Henry Harrison, called to the Presidency from his estate on the Ohio River.

The city of Cincinnati derives its name from the old story of Cincinnatus, and so does the Society of the Cincinnati, composed of descendants of officers in the American army in the Revolutionary War.

Circe

A charming woman may be pleased when she is called a "Circe," but some of the connotations of the name are decidedly unpleasant. It means not merely a woman who charms and enchants, but also a sorceress.

Circe is described as a fabulous sorceress who, according to Homer, was a "fair haired, clever goddess, possessing human speech." Round her palace were numbers of human beings whom she had changed into the shapes of wolves and lions by her drugs and spells. She changed twenty-two companions of Ulysses into swine; but that hero having obtained from Mercury a herb known as "moly," went boldly to the palace of the sorceress, remained uninjured by her drugs and charms, and induced her to disenchant his comrades.

Ulysses remained with her for a year, and when he departed she instructed him how to avoid the dangers which he would encounter on his homeward voyage.

Circle, Squaring the; see *Squaring the Circle*.

Claptrap

By "claptrap" is meant something, in actual being or in words only, that is showy but cheap and insincere. Discussing the financial relations of France and the United States, an editorial writer said:

"For five years this irritating business will con-

tinue to bedevil our relations with France by providing the jingoes on both sides with claptrap."

According to one authority on the origin of words, "claptrap" seems to have been derived from the clap net, used for trapping larks and other birds. Another says that "claptrap" is the name given to the rant that dramatic authors, to please actors, let them get off with; as much as to say, to catch a clap of applause from the spectators at a play.

The word "claptrap" is used as both an adjective and a noun.

Clear Out for Guam

"The Russian ship of state seems to be 'cleared out for Guam'—that is, to be bound for no definite place," said a commentator on current affairs.

A ship is said to "clear out for Guam" when it sails for no port in particular. Guam is a small island in the Pacific Ocean which has belonged to the United States since the Spanish-American War. In the height of the gold fever in Australia, ships were chartered to carry passengers thither from England, without having return cargoes obtained for them. They were, therefore, obliged to leave Melbourne in ballast, and sail in search of homeward bound freight. The custom house regulations required, however, that on clearing outward some port should be named; and it became the habit of captains to name Guam.

Hence, to "clear out for Guam" came to mean to clear out for just anywhere, to be bound for whatever coast the ship might choose to venture upon. Clergy, Benefit of; see *Benefit of Clergy*.

Clincher

"That's a 'clincher,'" says a man listening to a political speech; "you can't get around that argu-

ment." And that is exactly what a "clincher" is—something that you cannot get around, something that ends or settles an argument or a controversy.

The dictionary does not cast any light on the origin of the term, but it is said to have had its rise in the following story:

Two notorious liars were matched against each other, to see which of the two could tell the bigger "whopper." The first one said, "I drove a nail through the moon once." To this the other replied, "Yes, that's true, I remember the circumstance well, because I went around to the back and clinched it."

Closet, Skeleton in; see *Skeleton in the Closet*.

Coals, Hauling over the; see *Hauling over the Coals*

Cock and Bull Story

A "cock and bull" story is, in present-day language—or slang—a "fake." It is a yarn told with or without intent to deceive, in which one should take no stock.

There are various accounts of the origin of the phrase. The most probable explanation, says one authority, of this term as applied to preposterous tales related in private life, is that which refers it to the old fables in which birds and beasts are represented as endowed with the power of speech.

Another version says that in the olden days the Pope's bulls were named from the "bulla," or seal, which was attached to them. The seal bore the impression of a figure of St. Peter accompanied by the bird which crowed thrice when he disowned his Master. Hence, after the Reformation any tale or discourse which was unheeded was said to be on a par with a Pope's bull and was called a "cock and bull affair."

Cocked Hat

If you have ever had your plans "knocked into a cocked hat" you know what the phrase means. It is said that we get it from the game of ninepins, in which three pins were set up in the form of a triangle. When all the pins except these three were knocked down, the set was technically said to be "knocked into a cocked hat." Hence, the saying means "utterly out of all shape or plumb."

A "cocked hat" is one with the brim turned up, like that of an English dean, bishop, etc. The name is applied also to the well known military full dress hat which is pointed before and behind and rises to a point at the crown. "Cock" in this phrase means to turn; therefore, "cocked," means turned up.

The name is applied to the three-cornered hat worn by men in the time of the American Revolution.

Cocker, According to; see *According to Cocker*.
Comb, Cutting; see *Cutting the Comb*.

Come-Outers

A "come-outer" or a "regular come-outer" is one who adheres to his opinions through thick and thin, who will not compromise, or yield. Radical reformers are sometimes referred to by the name.

Bartlett's well known "Dictionary of Americanisms" says that "the name 'come outers' has been applied to a considerable number of persons in various parts of the United States, principally in New England, who have recently come out of the various religious denominations with which they have been connected; hence the name. They have not themselves assumed any distinctive organization. They have no creed, believing that every one should be left free to hold such opinions on religious subjects as he pleases, without being held accountable

for the same to any human authority. They hold a diversity of opinions on many points."

Comforter, Job's; see *Job's Comforter*.

Coming a Cropper

"Now Sir William Joynson-Hicks, that model of discretion, enumerates Derby among the 'candid friends' whose advice must be taken by any statesman who doesn't want to 'come a cropper,'" said an editorial on English politics.

"To come a cropper" means to "fall head over heels," and "to get a cropper" means to get a bad fall. The origin of the phrase is not altogether clear, but it seems to be connected with the old English phrase, "neck and crop," meaning entirely, altogether, as in the sentence, "I bundled him out, neck and crop." The crop is the gorge of a bird.

There is a variation of the saying, "I bundled him out neck and heels." There was a certain punishment formerly in vogue which consisted in bringing the chin and knees of the culprit forcibly together, and then thrusting the victim into a cage.

Confidence

A "confidence man" is one who wins your confidence, in order to betray it. He takes advantage of your good nature, your trust. It is said that the term had its origin as follows:

About sixty years ago, in New York City, there was a man, well dressed and of exceedingly genteel manners, who went about saying, in a very winning manner, to almost any gentleman he met, "Have you confidence enough in me, an entire stranger, to lend me five dollars for an hour or two?"

In this way, the story runs, he got a good deal of money, and came to be generally known in the courts and elsewhere as "the confidence man." New

York may have had the dubious honor of housing the first of this species, but it is fairly certain that his like are to be found in other cities.

Cooking One's Goose

"I'll cook his goose for him," you say when you are terribly angry with someone, and have made up your mind to dispose of him once for all.

The story goes that long ago a certain Eric, King of Sweden, being engaged in warfare, came to a certain town which he wished to capture. But he had with him only a few soldiers—too small in numbers, the townspeople thought, to effect the capture of the place. Therefore, to poke fun at the king, they hung out on the wall of the town a goose for the soldiers of the king to shoot at.

They soon found, however, that Eric and his soldiers were no joke, so they sent heralds to parley with him, and ask what he wanted.

"To cook your goose for you," was the king's answer.

Coon, Gone; see *'Gone Coon*.

Copperheads

"Compared with the copperhead, the rattlesnake is a gentlemanly, sportsmanlike foe, for he gives warning before he strikes, while the copperhead attacks without any preliminary notice," says a writer on the poisonous snakes of North America.

In the time of the Civil War, the name "Copperhead" was applied in the North to Northern men who were believed to be in secret sympathy with the Southern Confederacy, and to be giving aid and comfort to the enemies of the Washington Government.

The real copperhead is a poisonous serpent (scientific name *Trigonocephalus contortrix*, which may be translated as "triangular headed contortionist").

Its bite is considered as dangerous as that of the rattlesnake, to which it is allied. It ranges from Florida to 45 degrees north.

Cordelia's Gift

"Cordelia's gift" is one that is universally admired in women—a soft voice—and is best described in the words of Shakespeare; "Her voice was ever soft, gentle and low; an excellent thing in woman."

Cordelia is the youngest of the three daughters of King Lear in Shakespeare's play "King Lear," and she was the only one that truly loved him. In his comment on the play Dr. Johnson wrote:

"Shakespeare has suffered the virtue of Cordelia to perish in a just cause, contrary to the natural ideas of justice, to the hope of the reader, and, what is yet more strange, to the faith of chronicles. If my sensations could add anything to the general suffrage I might relate I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia's death that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor."

Cormorant

There are few terms of opprobrium that can be applied to a person with such telling effect as "cormorant." It is, perhaps, even worse to call a person a "cormorant" than to call him a "shark."

A "cormorant" is one who lets no restraint of conscience, or anything else, stand in the way of his greedy, avaricious accumulation of wealth. The name is derived from that of a bird which as a thoroughgoing glutton in pursuit of its food, which is fish. The cormorant is found in many parts of the world, in coastal regions. It is a large bird, with webbed feet. It collects its food in a kind of pouch formed by the very elastic skin at the front of its

throat. Cormorants are sometimes trained to catch fish, being prevented from swallowing them by a band around the throat.

Cornelia's Jewels

The expression "Cornelia's jewels," means children, the significance being that their value outweighs that of all other earthly treasures.

An ancient Roman tale says that one day a lady from Campania called upon Cornelia, the mother of the famous Gracchi, and after displaying her own jewels, requested to see in return those belonging to her hostess, whereupon Cornelia sent for her two young sons and said to her visitor: "These are my jewels, in which alone I delight."

It is related of St. Lawrence, who suffered martyrdom for his faith, in the year 258 A.D., that he was commanded by a Roman prætor to deliver up his treasures. "These are my treasures," answered the saint, pointing to the sick and poor to whom he ministered. He was then condemned to be roasted alive on a gridiron.

Corporal's Guard

A body of men that is reduced to a "corporal's guard" is one that has been brought down to the very lowest proportions—in fact, just about to the vanishing point.

"Though the membership fee was more than doubled, everybody wanted to join; a year later the eating program was dropped, and the membership fell away to a corporal's guard," says a newspaper editorial.

A corporal is the very lowest officer in an army; he is a non-commissioned officer, as is the sergeant, who outranks him. A general has, of course, the greatest number of guards; and the number is grad-

ually reduced until we get down to the corporal and he has no guard at all. His duty consists of placing and relieving sentinels, taking charge of small squads of recruits, and other such minor matters. The name "corporal" comes to us indirectly, through the French, from the Italian "capo" (Latin, "caput"), meaning "head."

In the history of American politics the term "corporal's guard" was applied to a small body of Whigs in Congress who stood by President John Tyler after he had alienated the bulk of the party by vetoing the tariff bill which they had passed.

Cotton To

The phrase, "to cotton to," means to take a liking to, to stick to like cotton. But it should be noted that good authorities say that the word is not derived from the name of the cotton plant, but from a Welsh word meaning "to agree, to consent."

The use of the word in the sense of "taking a liking to" was common several centuries ago. It is found occasionally in the works of the Elizabethan writers; perhaps the earliest known example is in a book dated 1567.

Bartlett's "Dictionary of Americanisms" lists the word as an Americanism, but "to cotton," like so many other so-called Americanisms, is simply a survival, in colloquial use on both sides of the Atlantic, of a respectable old English word.

Barham, author of the once widely read "Ingoldsby Legends," wrote: "For when once Madame Fortune deals out her hard raps, it's amazing to think, how one cottons to drink!"

Coup de Grâce

"Vicentini cuffed his man mercilessly, maneuvering him into position for the coup de grâce," said

an account of a prize fight. By "coup de grâce" the sporting writer meant a finishing stroke, but that is not quite the exact meaning of the term. It means a finishing stroke that is intended mercifully to put an end to the sufferings of a victim. Such a stroke was used by the old-time executioners in dispatching a victim sentenced to die by torture, and also by the ancient knights in ending the sufferings of a mortally wounded adversary.

The term is French, and means "blow of mercy." In Sir Walter Scott's novel, "The Betrothed," there is a description of the punishment known as "breaking on the wheel," which reads: "This punishment consists in the executioner, with a bar of iron, breaking the shoulder bones, arms, thigh bones, and legs, taking alternate sides. The punishment is concluded by a blow across the breast, called the 'coupe de grâce,' or blow of mercy, because it removes the sufferer from his agony." (See "Butterfly on the Wheel.")

Coup d'État

The French phrase, "coup d'état" (meaning, literally, a "stroke of state") may be said to have become embodied in the English language, although it is seldom if ever translated into English.

A "coup d'état" may be described as a sudden political move, generally one in which power is seized, overthrowing the existing order. A dispatch from Rome some years ago said that there were "rumors of coups d'état, of pronunciamientos by the Fascista militia, of a dictatorship."

One of the most celebrated of these "strokes of state" in modern history is the one whereby Napoleon III, in December, 1851, dissolved the French Assembly by force, and seized the supreme power in France, first by having himself elected president for

ten years and then by assuming the title of emperor. In recent years there have been many occurrences which have been called "coups d'état," especially since the great war brought about so many upheavals in Europe.

Covenant, Ark of; see *Ark of the Covenant*.

Coventry

When you send someone to Coventry, you simply refuse to have any dealing with him of any kind. It means about the same thing as "boycotting." The reference is, of course, to the English city of Coventry.

According to Chambers' Cyclopedica, the citizens of Coventry had at one time so great a dislike for soldiers that a woman seen speaking to one was instantly tabooed. No intercourse was ever allowed between the garrison and the town, hence, when a soldier was sent to Coventry, he was cut off from all social pleasures.

But there is another version which seems to fit the expression more closely. It tells us that during the civil wars in England in the seventeenth century, all troublesome royalists were sent by the "Roundheads" to Coventry for safekeeping.

Cow, Hackerston's; see *Hackerston's Cow*.

Craft, Gentle; see *Gentle Craft*.

Crichton, Admirable; see *Admirable Crichton*.

Crocodile's Tears

We all know persons who rejoice at the misfortunes of others, while pretending to feel deep sorrow. Such persons are said to shed "crocodile's tears."

According to a very ancient legend, the crocodile moans and sighs like a person in deep distress, in order to lure travelers to the spot, and even sheds

tears over its prey while in the very act of devouring it.

The crocodile seems to have been an object of awe to the ancients. The Egyptians made of the animal a symbol of deity because, according to Plutarch, it is the only aquatic animal which has its eyes covered by a thin, transparent membrane, by reason of which it sees and is not seen; so God sees all, Himself not being seen.

Cræsus

For many centuries the name of Cræsus has stood as a synonym for the possessor of great wealth; he who is called "as rich as Cræsus" must be wealthy indeed.

This Cræsus (pronounced "kre-sus") was an actual person, a king of Lydia, in Asia Minor. He reigned from 560 to 546 B.C., and was a ruler of ability who extended greatly the dominion which he inherited. After the overthrow of the Medean empire, in 549 B.C., the kings of Lydia and Babylonia leagued themselves against Cyrus of Persia. The tale is told that the oracle at Delphi gave Cræsus the ambiguous answer that if he marched against the Persians "a great empire would be overthrown." The empire proved to be his own. He was utterly defeated and taken prisoner, thus bringing to an end his kingly rule and his possession of enormous wealth. It is believed that Cyrus spared his life.

Crook, By; see By Hook or by Crook.

Cropper, Coming a; see Coming a Cropper.

Crossing the Rubicon

At the breaking out of civil war with Pompey, Cæsar with his army crossed the stream called the Rubicon, exclaiming "the die is cast." This was one of the three streams falling into the Adriatic and

forming part of the northern boundary of Italy proper and on that account the Roman generals were forbidden to pass it with an armed force. To do so was considered the equivalent of declaring war against Roman authority. And so, "to cross the Rubicon" now means to take a decisive step in any enterprise.

Crow, Eating; see *Eating Crow*.

Cruse, Widow's; see *Widow's Cruse*.

Crust, Upper; see *Upper Crust*.

Cry, Hue and; see *Hue and Cry*.

Cry, Macedonian; see *Macedonian Cry*.

Crying Havoc

To "cry havoc" means to issue a call to general devastation or destruction, as in war. To "play havoc" with anything is to destroy it utterly; a recent editorial writer said, "Such a super-dreadnaught could play havoc with second-rate battleships."

In the middle ages, havoc was a military cry to general massacre without quarter. So far as England was concerned, the cry was forbidden in the ninth year of Richard II (1386 A.D.) on pain of death. Probably the cry was used originally in hunting wild beasts, such as wolves, lions, etc.

Shakespeare uses the phrase more than once. In "Julius Cæsar" he has the famous, "Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war!"

Crying Wolf

This saying, so frequently used, "to cry wolf," means to give a false alarm. The reference is to the well known fable of the shepherd lad who used to cry "Wolf!" merely to make fun of his neighbors, but when at last the wolf really came, no one would believe him.

In Chinese history there is a story to the same effect, but it is said to relate to an actual occurrence. Yu Wang, an emperor of the third dynasty, was at-

tached to a woman named Pao Tse whom he tried by various means to make laugh. At length he hit upon the plan of having the war bells rung as if an enemy were at the gate, and Pao Tse laughed, at last, to see the people pouring into the city in alarm. The emperor, delighted with the success of his trick, repeated it again and again, but at length the enemy really did come. As might have been foreseen, the people paid no attention to the alarm, and the emperor paid with his life and the freedom of his people for his foolish trick.

Cummin, see *Anise and Cummin*.

Curtain Lectures

The term "curtain lectures" is applied to the discourses or harangues delivered by a wife to her husband when he is least desirous of being taken to task or called to account—that is, when he wishes to fall asleep. The expression comes from the curtains with which the old-time "four-poster" beds were provided. Naturally, the "curtain lectures" were delivered after the curtains were drawn.

In literature, the most famous of the "curtain lectures" were the imaginary ones described in a series of papers by Douglas William Jerrold, English humorist. The papers were published in "Punch"; they represent Mr. Job Caudle as a patient listener to and sufferer from the curtain lectures of his nagging wife.

"Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures" appeared in 1846. Their author, Douglas William Jerrold, was one of the best known British authors of the first half of the nineteenth century.

Cut Stick

To "cut stick" means, in the language of the day, to "beat it"—or, in more grammatical wording, to

run away. Various stories are related to account for the phrase. It is said that about the year 1820 a song was sung in Glasgow, beginning, "Oh, I creished my brogues, and I cut my stick." The song related the adventures of an Irishman and of course the "cutting of the stick" referred to the common practice of cutting a stick or staff before going on a journey. It afterwards became the practice, when anyone ran off or absconded, to say, "That chap has cut his stick, too," and thus the phrase originated and spread over the country.

In America it is believed the phrase arose from the fact that runaway slaves usually cut a large stick before starting, to help them on their way. Advertisements of runaway slaves were headed with woodcuts of a negro with a stick and bundle over his shoulder.

Cutting the Comb

When you "cut the comb" of someone you "call him down," or act in some other way to take down his conceit. A political writer opposed to President Coolidge referred to the overriding of a veto by Congress as "an attempt on the part of the lawmakers to 'cut the comb' of the President."

The allusion is, of course, to the practice of cutting the combs of roosters. It is calculated to humble them, since they take great pride in their combs. There is another saying, "to set up one's comb," which means to be conceited and boastful, like a gamecock crowing in his pride.

The comb is an indented fleshy growth found on the heads of various birds, especially the domestic fowls. The wattles found on some gamebirds are similar structures. The comb grows to a much larger size on males than on females and is usually brightly colored.

Cynic

In the word "cynic" is embodied a true figure of speech, since it represents in its present use a radical departure from the original meaning of the word. "Cynic" is the English form of the Greek word that means "doglike." Nowadays a cynic is a person who disbelieves in human goodness or the possibility of a man or woman acting from other than selfish motives.

The Cynics of history were a set of Greek philosophers founded by Antisthenes, a disciple of Socrates, about 400 B.C. Their name is derived either from the place where they usually taught, the Cynosarges, or the Greek word "kynos," a dog, in derision of their morose, snarling principles, and intense scorn for all the conventions, and even humanity at large. For the early Cynics, virtue alone was the highest good, and therefore both learning and pleasure were things contemptible.

Dædalus and Icarus

Since flying by men became common, there have been many references by writers to Dædalus and his son Icarus, who are credited in ancient stories with having been the first aviators. Dædalus was a mythical Greek sculptor who designed the famous labyrinth of Crete, and was himself cast into it by the king, Minos. To escape, he made wings for himself and his son Icarus, and flew across the Aegean Sea.

Dædalus reached Sicily in safety, but Icarus ventured too near the sun. The heat melted the wax with which his wings were attached to his body, and he fell into the sea and was drowned. The term "Icarian" is applied sometimes to a person who attempts something that is beyond his powers; in other words, one who "flies too high."

In Greek mythology Dædalus is noted not only as the first flier, but also as the inventor of the saw, the ax, the gimlet, etc.

Dam, Tinker's; see *Tinker's Dam*.

Dame Partington and Her Mop

When a person sets himself up to oppose progress of any sort, political, social, economic—especially progress that is sure to come in spite of his efforts—he is said to imitate Dame Partington. With a mop she tried to check the advancing tide of the Atlantic Ocean.

The English newspapers said that a Mrs. Partington had a cottage at Sidmouth, in Devonshire. In November, 1824, a heavy gale drove the sea waves into her house, and the old lady labored with a mop to sop the wet up till she was obliged to take refuge in the upper part of her house.

The Rev. Sydney Smith, speaking on the rejection by the House of Lords of the reform bill in October, 1831, compares the lords to Dame Partington with her mop trying to push back the Atlantic. "She was excellent," he said, "at a slop or puddle, but she should never have meddled with a tempest."

Damocles' Sword

Probably every one of mature age has been oppressed at times by a sense of impending disaster, of something terrible "hanging over one's head," as the saying goes. One is said to feel the "sword of Damocles" hanging overhead.

The story goes that Damocles, a flatterer at the court of Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse, wearied the ruler with praising constantly the fancied happiness of kings. Dionysius invited Damocles to taste the supposedly perfect felicity, at a splendid banquet. While the flatterer was enjoying his semi-regal state,

his host called upon him to look above his head. There, suspended by a single hair, he saw hanging a heavy sword.

The vanity of earthly pomp, as well as the foreboding of evil, are symbolized in the story and the saying.

Dan to Beersheba

"From Dan to Beersheba" means throughout the entire length and breadth of the land. It is often used by political writers, one of whom said, in a campaign editorial: "We shall surely win; from Dan to Beersheba the voters are aroused, and they have determined to install a new administration."

Dan was the most northern limit of Israel, near the sources of the Jordan. It became an idolatrous city, and during the reign of Jeroboam gave way to calf worship. It was destroyed by the Syrian king, Benhadad. The site has been identified in modern times. Beersheba was, in the ancient days, a town in the extreme south of Palestine, fifty miles from Jerusalem. The covenant of Abraham and Abimelech, king of the Philistines, was made at Beersheba. Very little of the old town of Beersheba is now left, but about twenty years ago it was recorded that the two wells still remained, and contained a supply of water. The Arabs call Beersheba by the name "Bir-es-Seba," meaning "the well of the lions."

Dancing Dervishes, see *Howling Dervishes*.

Dark Ages

"Another such war as we have passed through, and our civilization will descend to the lowest depths of hell; yes, we shall find ourselves back in the Dark Ages," said a speaker.

The "Dark Ages" is a name that is often given to

a period in the world's history that was marked by "the eclipse of learning, the arts and the sciences, and all the usages of civilized life." It was the early period of the middle ages, between the fall of the Roman empire—that is, the western portion of the old Roman empire—in the year 475 A.D.—and the revival of learning on the discovery of the pandects at Amalfi, Italy, in 1137; roughly speaking, a period of about 700 years.

The Dark Ages lasted longer in the north of Europe than in the South, as the revival of study occurred in Italy sooner than in northern Europe. Of course, even in the so-called "Dark Ages" there were scholars who strove to keep alight the torch of learning.

Dark Horse

By a "dark horse" is meant one who, up to a certain time, has remained in the background, but who suddenly comes to the front and snatches victory from others. The phrase is used frequently in sports and politics.

In its present sense, the phrase was used by Thackeray in his story, "Adventures of Philip." Said Philip, referring to some talk about a candidate for Parliament, "Well, bless my soul, he can't mean me. Who is the dark horse he has in his stable?" The phrase was also used by Lord Beaconsfield, the English statesman and novel writer. It occurs in his story, "The Young Duke." He says:

"The first favorite was never heard of, the second favorite was never seen after the distance post, all the ten-to-ones were in the rear, and a dark horse, which had never been thought of, rushed past the grandstand in a sweeping triumph."

Darkness, Cimmerian; see *Cimmerian Darkness*.

Davy Jones

In an article which stated that some of the explosive mines set adrift in the ocean during the Great War were still afloat, seafaring men were warned to avoid such mines "because they may or may not be capable of sending a ship to Davy Jones, and it is best to take no chances."

"Davy Jones" is the sailor's name for the evil spirit of the sea, the sailor's devil, whose famous "locker" is the ocean, the grave of those who die at sea.

It is believed that "Jones" is a corruption of Jonah, the prophet, who was thrown into the sea, while "locker" means, in the seaman's phrase, any receptacle for private stores. The "Davy" is said to be derived from "duffy," meaning a ghost or spirit among the West Indian negroes.

Deaconed

In a letter on the packing of apples for the market, a writer says:

"As apple barrels are packed upside down and the bottom put in last, under pressure, the result of that pressure shows more toward the bottom, and the impression of a 'deaconed' pack results sometimes."

To "deacon" means, in this sense, to cheat; to put on top the best specimens of fruit, etc., and fill the rest of the barrel with inferior ones. One authority defines "deaconing" as "hypocritical posing."

Of course, most deacons are far above such practices, and it is a libel on many honest, God-fearing men to use such an expression, but it does exist in the English language. It typifies those men among the deacons who use their religion and their official positions in the church as a cloak for hypocrisy and unfair dealing.

There is another expression, "deaconing off," which means reading or singing a hymn line by line, to be followed by the rest of the congregation.

Dead as a Door Nail

The expression, "dead as a door nail," is one of the most common folk-sayings in the English language, in all ranks of society, probably—and that is all the more remarkable because the door nail to which it refers is obsolete save in some very old-fashioned houses, or houses that are built to imitate the old-fashioned.

Before doorbells of the wire-pull variety, or the later push-button electric sort, came into general use, the usual method of announcement of a visit was by means of pounding with a door knocker. The visitor raised the knocker and struck it against a metal plate set into a panel of the door.

This plate was fastened sometimes by a door nail, and as it was constantly being pounded on the head, it was assumed that the life was hammered out of it very soon. From this fact it was further assumed that nothing could possibly be deader than a door knob or door nail. Hence the expression, "as dead as a door nail."

Dead Hand

Speaking of a certain measure that had been proposed for the alleviation of the financial ills of France, the finance minister of that country said that it had been like the "hand of death" wherever it had been applied.

"Dead hand" or "mortmain" (which is the same thing, only in legal English-French) is a term that is celebrated in the legal history of England and America and other countries. It means, according to "Webster's New International Dictionary," "the

hand or possession of ecclesiastical corporations, ecclesiastics being in the early law deemed civilly dead; later, the possession of, or tenure by, any corporation which, by reason of the nature of corporations, may be perpetual."

Naturally, anything that falls under the "dead hand" is withdrawn from ordinary use. In the famous "Commentaries" of Blackstone there is an instructive account of the protracted duel between the lawmakers and the churchmen over the subject of "mortmain."

Dead Head

A "dead head" is one who gets a pass, or free admission to a theatrical performance, a ball game, etc., for which admission is charged. The term is very old, and most authorities cast no light on its origin. According to some, however, it arose from an old-time custom of marking passes with the sign of the skull and cross-bones, or "dead head."

In ancient Greece the theaters were opened at sunrise, or even as soon as daybreak, and the spectators assembled very early, in order to get good seats. As the theaters were built at the public expense, at first the seats were free. But this caused so great a commotion and contest for seats, that a law was passed at Athens under which a fee for admission was required. This was fixed, for a time at least, at two oboli. But under the influence of Pericles, another law was enacted requiring the proper magistrate to furnish from the public treasury the amount of this fee to everyone who applied for it.

Dead Sea Fruit

Something that you strive for eagerly, and that turns out to be a bitter disappointment when gained,

is said to be "Dead Sea Fruit." It is called sometimes "Dead Sea Apples" or "Apples of Sodom."

Ancient writers declared that fruit that grew on the shores of the Dead Sea was very fair in outward appearance, but when it was plucked it turned to smoke and ashes in the hand. "Like to the apples on the Dead Sea shore, all ashes to the taste," writes Byron in "Childe Harold."

In an old book called "Gallery of Geography" there is a description of an "apple or orange of Sodom," that "resembles a smooth apple or orange which, upon being struck or pressed, explodes with a puff and is reduced to the rind and a few fibres, being chiefly filled with air."

The name "Apple of Sodom" is given sometimes to the fruit of a prickly shrub which bears fruit not unlike a small yellow tomato.

Death, Black; see *Black Death*.

Deep Sea, Devil and; see *Devil and the Deep Sea*.

Deluge; see *After Me, the Deluge*.

Derelicts, Human; see *Human Derelicts*.

Dervishes, Howling; see *Howling Dervishes*.

Despond, Slough of; see *Slough of Despond*.

Deus ex machina; see *God from the Machine*.

Devil, Cheating the; see *Cheating the Devil*.

Devil and the Deep Sea

When one is in a dilemma from which there seems no escape, and the choice is only between two evils that are seemingly equal in undesirability, one is said to be "between the devil and the deep sea." "In the matter of passing from one part of the vessel to another when she was rolling, we were indeed between the devil and the deep sea," said a magazine article—but, of course, in this case the phrase was used almost literally and not figuratively.

It is generally held that the reference is to the miracle performed by Christ as described in the

eighth chapter of St. Matthew, in which he cast out the devils from the two men, and made them pass into the herd of swine. "So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine; and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters."

The devil is sometimes represented in art as having a cloven foot, because he is called a goat by Rabbinical writers, as an emblem of uncleanness.

Devil's Advocate

A "devil's advocate" is one who brings out anything bad that can be said against a person or thing under discussion, especially when there is general commendation or praise of such person or thing.

We get the phrase from an anciently established practice of the Roman Catholic Church, when it is proposed to canonize a person. It is well known, of course, that the Church is very strict in its rules for admission to canonization, and that the career and character of the man or woman proposed must pass the most rigid scrutiny. With that end in view, a person is nominated by the Congregation of Rites to search out and bring forth any defects that may exist in the claim. This person is known as "advocatus diaboli," or "devil's advocate," although his proper title is "promotor fidei," or protector of the faith."

Diamond in the Rough

There are persons of fine qualities who hide their better selves behind rough exteriors, or whose sterling worth is concealed by uncouth manners, lack of

education, etc. Such persons are frequently called "diamonds in the rough." Like diamonds, they need polishing to bring out their real worth.

When the diamond is found in its native state, it bears little resemblance to the finished gem. "An unpolished diamond looks for all the world like a piece of luminous alum," says one authority. "For centuries this was the only way people knew diamonds. Even after men discovered how to polish away the dull outer skin, the diamond was not the sparkling gem you know."

It has been determined by chemical experiments that the diamond is pure carbon in a crystallized form.

Diana, Chaste as; see *Chaste as Diana*.

Dick Turpin

Whenever a highwayman shows unusual daring and a contempt for the officers of the law, someone is pretty sure to compare him with Dick Turpin. Dick has acquired such fame in the annals of crime that his name has become almost, if not quite, a household word.

He was an English highwayman whose daring exploits on his famous mare, "Black Bess," have obtained for him in the eyes of posterity an almost legendary renown. He was the son of an innkeeper in Essex, and was born between 1706 and 1711. His career of crime did not last long, as he was hanged at York, for horse stealing, in 1739. He began his exploits by stealing cattle from a butcher to whom he was apprenticed.

Naturally, the exploits of Dick Turpin have figured in many so-called "dime novels." Harrison Ainsworth, English novelist, put him in his romance: "Rookwood."

Dickens

Some folks who retain too much of the old-time respect for Satan to use his every-day name, the devil, in their daily talk, have no compunctions about referring to him as the "dickens." They speak, for example, about "raising the dickens," when they really mean "raising the devil." (Such use of a softer term for one that is harsher is called a "euphemism.")

"Dickens" is generally said to be corrupted from "Nick," which is familiar in the form of "Old Nick." Such use of "dickens" was well established by the time of Shakespeare, for in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" he makes Mrs. Page say:

"I cannot tell what the dickens his name is."

The dictionary says that "dickens" is probably derived from a proper name, Dicken or Diccon, which is a form of Richard, and which is frequently shortened to Dick. The use of "dickens" as a euphemism for the devil, has, of course, no connection with the name of the English novelist, Charles Dickens.

Dilemma, Horns of a; see *Horns of a Dilemma*.

Dining with Duke Humphrey

When you "dine with Duke Humphrey" you don't dine at all; that is, you have no dinner to go to.

Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, son of King Henry IV of England, was renowned for his hospitality. When he died it was reported that a monument would be erected to him in St. Paul's, but his body was interred at St. Albans.

When the promenaders, in the old days in London, left for dinner, the poor stay-behinds, who had no dinners to go to, used to say to those who asked whether they were going, that they would stay a

little longer and look for the monument of the duke. Then arose the expression, "to dine with Duke Humphrey."

There is another similar English saying, "to sup with Sir Thomas Gresham"—the London exchange built by Sir Thomas being a common lounging place.

Dinner, Barmecide; see *Barmecide Feast*.

Diogenes, Lantern of; see *Lantern of Diogenes*.

Discord, Apple of; see *Apple of Discord*.

Ditch, Last; see *Last Ditch*.

Dixie Land

The term "Dixie" or Dixie Land," applied to the Southern states, originated in New York in the early part of the nineteenth century. It is said to have come into general use when Texas joined the Union, and the negroes sang of it as "Dixie."

In the popular mythology of New York City, Dixie was the negroes' paradise on earth, in times when slavery and the slave trade were flourishing in that quarter. A man named Dixie owned a tract of land on the Island of Manhattan, and also a large number of slaves, and his slaves increased faster than his land. An emigration ensued and, naturally, negroes who left it for distant parts looked back on it as a place of unalloyed happiness. In fact, it was looked upon as the "ole Virginny" of that day. Hence, "Dixie" became synonymous with an ideal locality, combining ineffable happiness and every imaginable requisite of earthly existence.

Dodger, Artful; see *Artful Dodger*.

Dog, Hunt's; see *Hunt's Dog*.

Dog Days

The "dog days" are the hottest days of the summer. The time varies, of course, with the latitude of a place, but in the north temperate zone, the dog days occur between the early part of July and the early part of September.

The expression "dog days" was used by the ancient Greeks and Romans. They associated them with the rising of Sirius, the most brilliant of the fixed stars in the head of the constellation Canis Major (or Greater Dog), at the same time as the sun, and they attributed the extreme summer weather to the influence of this conjunction.

In popular belief, the dog days are the extremely sultry part of the summer, when dogs are supposed to be especially liable to madness.

Dogs and Cats, Raining; see *Raining Cats and Dogs*.
Doit, Not Worth a; see *Not Worth a Doit*.

Dolce Far Niente

Not long ago, in a letter to a New York newspaper, a Southerner spoke of the "dolce far niente" atmosphere of his native state. The phrase, "dolce far niente," is quite commonly used in literature, and means literally, "sweet do nothing." It is Italian and is derived from the Latin.

"Dolce far niente" describes what some Roman authors held to be the highest good possible to human beings, the "sweet do nothing," of a life in a country where the climate would naturally produce a lassitude that would make labor a doubly hard task.

The idea, if not the exact expression, is found in Cicero, in Pliny and in other Roman authors. Of course, the idea itself is not necessarily Roman—it must have found expression in the thoughts and sayings and writings of many others who sought in an ideal existence the surcease from care and sorrow denied them here.

Doldrums

Are you tired of life? Do you feel that nothing matters any more? It may be said then that you are

"in the doldrums." The expression means also that one is listless or indifferent.

"Doldrums" is the name given to that region of the ocean near the equator noted for calms, squalls and baffling winds, making it impossible for a sailing vessel to progress, sometimes for weeks. It is easy to see that the expression "in the doldrums" denotes the impossibility of a person's making mental progress.

There is an old English word, "doldrum," now obsolete, meaning a person who is dull or mentally sluggish. It is derived from the same root as the English word "dull," it is believed.

Don Juan

A "Don Juan" (pronounced "Don Ju-an," or, in the Spanish manner, "Don Hwan") is a man who gives himself up entirely to the pursuit of pleasure, especially lovemaking. According to the old stories, however, the original Don Juan in the end was compelled to acknowledge the worthlessness of a merely sensuous, godless and immoral existence.

Don Juan was not an actual person, but merely the central figure in a number of old tales or legends found in the literatures of various countries. In one Spanish tradition he is called Don Juan de Tenorio, and in a duel he kills the father of a young woman whom Don Juan has sought to betray. The story goes that the evil-doer visits the grave of his victim, and mockingly invites the statue of the latter to a supper. The image accepts and in the end drags Don Juan down to the nether regions.

Donnybrook Fair

Returning home from a summer resort, not long ago, a crowd of men and boys became disorderly in a railroad station, and it required the efforts of a

squad of policemen to quiet them. A reporter, describing the scene, said that "the onlookers were reminded of the famous Donnybrook Fair, where each man's hand was raised against his neighbor, and they fought just for the fun of hitting out in all directions."

The Donnybrook Fair has been noted for many centuries as a scene of riotous disorders, and its name has been a favorite synonym for that sort of thing. But by the year 1855 it had become so scandalous that it was suppressed by the government. Donnybrook is an old village of Ireland, and is now a part of Pembroke, a western suburb of Dublin. Its famous, or notorious, fair, held annually toward the end of August, was established in the reign of King John, and remained one of the features of Irish life for five centuries.

Don't Care a Jot

A "jot," as in the phrase "a jot or tittle," means anything small, because the letter *iota* was the smallest in the Greek alphabet. Moreover, it was often, by an abbreviation, written as a dot beneath the line—"iota subscript." The word "jot" may be from this or from *yod*, the smallest Hebrew letter. The Greek *iota* and the Hebrew *yod* are equivalent to the English "i."

Door Nail, Dead as; see *Dead as a Door Nail*.

Dough Face

By "dough face" is meant a man without the courage of his convictions, especially a timid, yielding politician. Before the Civil War, the name was applied to those Northern politicians who sympathized with and abetted negro slavery.

The expression is said to have originated with the famous John Randolph of Roanoke. It is said

to have been used by him in allusion to those Northern members of Congress that showed a willingness to accede to the demands of the South.

Referring to such "dough faces" on a certain occasion, Randolph said: "I knew that these men would give way. They were scared at their own dough faces. We had them; and if we had wanted more we could have had them."

The expression "caught on" in the days just before and during the Civil War, and was used also in the South as a term of contempt for their own men who favored the abolition of slavery.

Dove of Peace

For very many years the dove has been used, in art as well as in literature, as a symbol of peace, and the expression, "the dove of peace," is common to many lands and many languages. It is, indeed, one of the most common of our figures of speech.

It may be that its origin is to be found in the Biblical story of the sending out of the dove by Noah to ascertain whether the flood had subsided.

In the very early times the dove was used to represent the Holy Ghost, and it is often seen in pictures which deal with the various periods of the life of Christ, especially in those of the annunciation and His baptism. The dove was used also as the form of the pyx, and was sometimes placed on fonts, when it was represented with three pairs of wings and typified the church. Sometimes it symbolizes also the human soul, and as such it is represented as coming out of the mouths of saints at death.

Dragon's Teeth

"To sow dragon's teeth" means to plant the seeds of civil war. The allusion is to a story told of Cad-

mus, an ancient tale in Greek mythology. Cadmus was a famous hero and the story of the dragon's teeth is only one of many related of him.

The dragon had been set by Mars to guard a sacred well. Cadmus slew the dragon after the monster had killed his servants. When he had done so, he heard a voice from heaven (the goddess Minerva's) commanding him to take the dragon's teeth and sow them in the earth. From the teeth sprang up armed men, who fought with one another until only five remained. These five joined with Cadmus in founding the city of Thebes and were the ancestors of the Thebans. As a penance for killing the dragon, Cadmus had to serve Mars for a period of eight years.

Dragooning

To "dragoon" means to compel or to try to compel anyone to take a certain course of action, by harsh or unjust measures. The use of the word is well illustrated by the following quotation from a recent editorial:

"As a State enforcement bill, even if the opposition can be dragooned into passing it, the measure cannot make its way past the Governor's veto." The historian Macaulay says, "Louis XIV is justly censured for trying to dragoon his subjects to Heaven." "Dragonnades" is the name given to a series of religious persecutions by Louis XIV, which drove many thousands of Protestants out of France.

The soldiers called "dragoons" are so named because they used to be armed with "dragons," short muskets which were said to spout fire as did the fabulous beasts called dragons.

Drakes and Ducks; see *Ducks and Drakes*.

Drawing a Red Herring Over a Trail

To a request for information concerning the origin of the phrase "to draw a red herring across the trail," the "Literary Digest" replied:

"The correct rendering of the phrase is 'to draw a red herring across the track.' It dates back to the middle of the seventeenth century, and owes its origin to the practice of drawing a dead cat or fox or a red herring across a track, to train dogs in hunting. The expression soon came into figurative use, and today it means 'to divert attention from the main question by some side issue.' From this application of 'red herring' the term has acquired a figurative sense to designate anything used to divert one's attention."

A writer of stories, especially of detective stories, is said to draw a red herring across the trail when he puts in a hint or statement in the early part of his story to put the reader on the wrong scent.

Dressed Up to the Nines

When a person is "dressed up to the nines," as the old saying goes, he or she is really and truly "dressed up"—that is, to the very height of perfection or style. The phrase was used by Robert Louis Stevenson.

Its origin is obscure, but it is conjectured that it has some reference to the nine Muses. The number nine has always been considered by the superstitious, of all ages, to have some mysterious power. For example, there are, according to ancient belief, nine orders of angels. A cat has nine lives. We all know that "possession is nine points of the law." There were nine worthies, or pre-eminent men, in the history of the world, according to ancient belief.

The people of the Oriental countries believe that

they must give presents by nines if they wish to express the very highest regard for the receiver.

Dryasdusts

"The college man wants mainly to know who are the 'live ones' of his own generation; dead authors he is perfectly willing to leave to the 'Dryasdusts,'" says a commentator on the ways and manners of "the younger generation."

A "Dryasdust" is a heavy, plodding author, very prosy, very dull and very learned—an antiquary, perhaps. When Sir Walter Scott was trying to conceal his authorship of the novels that were to bring him fame and wealth, he wrote prefaces for some of them; these introductions to the stories told, among other matters, of the historical bases for the stories. These prefaces Scott signed "Rev. Dr. Dryasdust."

The name "caught on" with Scott's contemporaries, and has been adopted by others since then. For example, Carlyle wrote that in his opinion "the Prussian 'Dryasdust' excels all other 'Dryasdusts' yet known. The American philosopher, William James, uses the word as an adjective, speaking of a man "in whose dry-as-dust head all the learning of the early eighteenth century was concentrated."

Ducks and Drakes

"To put the returns at the mercy of any special committee is simply to play ducks and drakes with the right of privacy, for the purpose of partisanship," says an editorial writer.

To "play ducks and drakes" with something, or to "make ducks and drakes of it," is to throw it away foolishly. The phrases are used most frequently in connection with money, as when an heir to a fortune squanders it. Dinah Muloch Craik, the English novelist, says, "Mr. Locke Harper found

out, a month after his marriage, that somebody had made ducks and drakes of his wife's money."

The reference is to the sport of throwing flat stones in such a way as to make them skim, or ricochet over the surface of the water. This sport is called sometimes "playing ducks and drakes," although other names, such as "cutting an egg," are applied to the pastime.

Ducks, *Lame*; see *Lame Ducks*.

Duke Humphrey, *Dining With*; see *Dining With Duke Humphrey*.

Dulcinea

A "Dulcinea" is a lady love, one to whom a sweetheart is paying attention. The original Dulcinea is one of the most famous sweethearts in literature, being none other than the young woman beloved by Don Quixote, in Cervantes' celebrated novel of that name.

The real name of the young woman—that is, her real name according to the book—was Aldonza Lorenzo, but that sounded too harsh to the infatuated knight, so he dubbed her "Dulcinea del Toboso," which he declared, was a name more "harmonious, uncommon and significant than her own." She was only a peasant girl, but the crazed knight invested her in his fancy with all the graces and attributes of a beautiful, learned, witty, high-bred lady.

Not long ago an investigator who was interested in the story of Don Quixote undertook a search into the originals of the characters of the story, and discovered that Cervantes' "Dulcinea del Toboso" was drawn from a real character.

Dust, *Throwing*; see *Throwing Dust*.

Dutch Uncle

Just why a Dutch uncle should be more severe than any other variety of uncle it is hard to say, but it

is certain that for a good many years the saying, "to talk like a Dutch uncle," has meant to "haul over the coals," to reprove severely, to "call down."

It is interesting to note that in the old Roman days an uncle stood for a severe guardian, one who would make a person walk a very straight line. In one of the odes of Horace he speaks of "dreading the castigations of an uncle's tongue," and in another place one of his characters says, "Don't come the uncle over me."

The phrase crops up every once in a while, in newspapers and magazines. Not long ago, in an account of a judicial proceeding, a newspaper said that the prosecuting attorney was very severe in his handling of a witness for the defense and talked to him "like a Dutch uncle."

Dutchman, Flying; see *Flying Dutchman*.

Ear, Flea in One's; see *Flea in One's Ear*.

Ear Marked

Anything that is "ear marked" is marked to be set aside for a particular purpose. The reference or allusion is to the practice of marking cattle and sheep on the ear so that they may be recognized readily. The branding of cattle and horses is, of course, a variation of "ear marking."

An old account of the custom says:

"Ear marks and other marks of ownership on cattle, horses, sheep and swine were important, and rigidly regarded where so much value was kept in domestic cattle. These ear marks were registered by the town clerk in the town records and were usually described both in words and in rude drawings."

Sometimes money that is set aside for a particular purpose is said to be "ear marked," although, of course, no especial mark is placed on the money itself or its containers.

Earth, Salt of the; see *Salt of the Earth*.

Eating Crow

From the very earliest ages, the crow has been considered unfit for human food. Therefore, "to eat crow" means to be compelled to eat one's words, to confess wrongdoing when confession is especially distasteful, to "back down," etc.

The story goes that a soldier, having shot a tame crow belonging to one of his officers, was discovered by its owner with the dead bird in his hand. Seizing the private's musket, the officer declared that the private, having killed the bird, must eat it, or be killed himself. The soldier had to submit, but the officer relented when the bird was half eaten. He returned the gun to its owner, whereupon the latter immediately swore that unless the officer finished the bird he would be shot.

The next day the private was court-martialed. When called upon to explain his conduct, he said that nothing had happened save that Captain Blank and he had dined together!

Eavesdroppers

An "eavesdropper" means a listener. The word is explained thus in the "Encyclopedia of Freemasonry":

"The punishment which was directed in the old lectures, at the revival of Masonry in 1717, to be inflicted on a detected cowan (listener) was: 'To be placed under the eaves of the house in rainy weather, till the water runs in at his shoulders and out at his heels.' The French inflict a similar punishment."

Blackstone, the famous authority on the common law, says in his "Commentaries":

"Eavesdroppers, or such as listen under walls, or windows, or the eaves of a house, to harken after discourse, and thereupon to frame slanderous and

mischievous tales, are common nuisances, and presentable at the court leet; or are indictable at the sessions, and punishable by fine and finding sureties for their good behavior."

"Eclipse First"

In forecasting the result of an important horse race, a sporting writer said, "In our opinion, it will be another case of 'Eclipse first.'" He meant that the horse which he favored would win so easily that there would be "nothing to it." The full wording of the saying about Eclipse is "Eclipse first and the rest nowhere."

This was used first on the occasion of a race run at Epsom, England. It is attributed to a certain Captain O'Kelly, an ardent Irish follower of the horses. The horse Eclipse was a famous racer of his time, and there is still run annually at the great race meeting at Newmarket, England, a race called, after him, the Eclipse Stakes.

It is written sometimes that the saying "Eclipse first, the rest nowhere," is connected with the winning of the Epsom Derby, but that is not the fact, since the saying originated in 1769, and the first Derby was not run until 1780.

El Dorado

"El Dorado," the "gilded," is a place of fabulous wealth, where there is enough to satisfy the desires of all for wealth without stint. The name is Spanish.

It was given to a fabulous city long believed to exist somewhere in the interior of northern South America. It was the imaginary goal of countless futile expeditions, such as those of Orellana, in 1540, of Philip von Hutten, 1541-1545, who told how once he had caught a glimpse of the gleaming city, and

of Ximenes de Quesada, 1569. The purely legendary city of Manoa, with roofs and walls of precious stones, to which Martinez said he had been taken, long occupied a conspicuous place on the map, until Humboldt proved it to be a fiction. But although El Dorado has lost its place on the map, in these commonplace days which take nothing for granted, it has obtained a high place in literature as the goal of happiness after which humanity never wearies of striving.

Elephant, White; see *White Elephant*.

End, Bitter; see *Bitter End*.

English, King's (and Queen's); see *King's English*.

Enoch Arden

An "Enoch Arden" is a husband who disappears, remains away a long time, and returns to find his wife, who has believed him to be dead, married to another. To complete the story, he must go away again without revealing himself, and die of a broken heart, as did the returned sailor in Tennyson's poem, "Enoch Arden."

"Enoch Arden" has been one of the best liked of the poems of Tennyson, and there have been translations in most if not all of the languages of Europe. Eugene Parsons, in his pamphlet on "Tennyson's Life and Poetry," names no less than twenty-four translations; nine in German, two in Dutch, one in Danish, one in Bohemian, eight in French, one in Spanish and two in Italian. That was in 1893; there have been other translations since that time.

The story of "Enoch Arden" was told to the poet by his friend Woolner the sculptor. A similar tale, but with a different ending, is found in a poem entitled "Homeward Bound," by Adelaide Anne Procter.

Ephebic Oath

The "ephebic oath" is an oath of loyalty to one's country, State, city, etc., taken by a youth on reaching maturity. It is derived from the Greek "ephebi," the plural of "ephebus." An ephebus was a youth between the ages of eighteen and twenty, in ancient Athens. When that age was attained, it was considered that the young man was entering manhood. "Webster's New International Dictionary" says: "At Athens a youth was an ephebus from the age of eighteen to twenty, during which period he received military and gymnastic training. In later and Roman times the ephebic training lasted only a year, and literary and philosophic studies were substituted for the military training."

At the College of the City of New York, the institution for higher learning for young men maintained by the city, it is customary to administer to the young men on their graduation an "ephebic oath" of loyalty to the city. This is, of course, a revival of the ancient custom.

Ephemeral

Anything that is "ephemeral" lasts only a very short time; in fact, the word is derived from two Greek words that mean "over in a day." It is applied to a thing that has a transient interest; for example, a newspaper or other periodical that prints matter of no permanent interest. The word is pronounced "e-phem-er-al," with the accent on the second syllable.

"Ephemera" is the name of a class of insects that has an adult life of only a few hours, or a day, at most. They are often known as "day flies" or May flies," and resemble dragon flies. While the adult life

is so very short, the larval life, passed in water, is sometimes two or three years.

An "ephemeris" is an astronomical calendar or almanac, giving the computed places of the heavenly bodies for each day in the year. It is of great use to astronomers and navigators.

Era of Good Feeling

Any period of time when there is quiet between hitherto contending factions or parties is likely to be called an "era of good feeling." This is especially true in politics, since the term was applied originally to a period of peace or truce between American political parties. It was the administration of President James Monroe, 1817-1825.

The excitement and bitter animosities aroused by the War of 1812 had subsided, and there was no sectionalism, such as arose later to disturb the repose, prosperity and progress of the country. The attention of all Americans was turned to the development of the internal resources of the country and to the building up of its industries.

Soon after his inauguration, President Monroe visited all the military posts in the North and East. Among the places which received him was Boston, and Benjamin Russell, the editor of the "Centinel" of that city, originated the phrase, "the era of good feeling."

Erinyes, see *Furies*.

Ermine, Wearer of; see *Wearer of the Ermine*.

Estate, Fourth; see *Fourth Estate*.

Etiquette

"Etiquette," meaning the customs or usages of polite society, is derived from the old French "estiquette," meaning a label; a better known English derivative being "ticket."

The "estiquette" seems to have been a kind of card of introduction. This offers some explanation of the later use of the word. One authority defines etiquette as "the behavior dictated by good breeding, the formal ceremonies prescribed by authority as appropriate to various social, court and other official functions, and especially the observance of the rules of precedence, and of the other proprieties of rank and office." The eccentricities of etiquette are often ridiculed as being dictated by the mythical "Mrs. Grundy." One who wishes to be very careful of "what Mrs. Grundy will say" will learn and observe the rules of etiquette.

The historian Prescott speaks of "the pompous etiquette of the court."

Eumenides, see *Furies*.

Eureka

The word "Eureka" is Greek, and means, literally, "I have found." It is translated sometimes as "I have found it." To cry out "Eureka!" means that a person has found something long sought, or has accomplished something after much effort.

Archimedes, the most celebrated mathematician and engineer of antiquity, was ordered by King Hiero of his native, Syracuse, to ascertain the proportion of pure gold in the king's crown. After much thought, Archimedes immersed the crown in water and weighed the water displaced. The story goes that he was so excited that he ran through the streets crying, "Eureka! Eureka!"

Archimedes lived in the third century before Christ and was killed by the Romans when they captured Syracuse. He invented the screw for raising water. "Eureka" is the motto of the State of California.

Evil Eye

To cast the evil eye on anyone is to bewitch him, to send out from the eyes such rays as will work evil in the life of the person against whom the glance is directed.

It was believed in ancient days, and it is still held in many parts of the world, that certain persons had or have the power of "the evil eye." The Roman poet Virgil speaks of an evil eye making cattle lean. It is related as a fact that shortly after the elevation to the pontifical throne of Pope Pius IX, who was then adored by the Romans and perhaps the best loved man in Italy, he was driving through the streets when he happened to glance upward at an open window at which a nurse was standing with a child. A few minutes afterward the nurse dropped the child and it was killed. No one thought the Pope had wished this, but the fancy that he had the "evil eye" became universal and lasted until his death.

In more recent days some of the most celebrated persons in Italy, including one of the greatest archæologists, have been suspected of having the "evil eye."

Ex Cathedra

Anyone who speaks or writes "ex cathedra" does so as one having authority, since the meaning of "ex cathedra" is "from the chair"; that is, from the chair of knowledge and power. Sometimes the phrase is used ironically, as when it is applied to one who is addicted to self-sufficient, dogmatical assertions. A recent book review says that "the author does not hesitate to speak in his most pronounced ex cathedra manner."

According to Roman Catholic authorities, the Pope, when he is speaking ex cathedra, is infallible

—he speaks as the successor and representative of Saint Peter, and in his pontifical character. The words are Latin, and mean “from the chair,” and when applied to the Pontiff they refer to his chair or throne.

The doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope, when speaking *ex cathedra* on a question of doctrinal faith or rule of morals, was promulgated in 1870.

Eye, Evil; see *Evil Eye*.
Eye, My; see *All My Eye*.

Facing the Music

“Well, I suppose I’ll have to ‘face the music,’” you hear somebody say. You understand him to mean by it that he will have to go through some kind of ordeal, or bear the consequences of something he has done.

In a book on “Americanisms” we read that “facing the music” is a slang phrase derived, according to James Fenimore Cooper, from the stage, and used by actors in the green room when they are nervously preparing to go on the boards and, literally, “face the music.”

Another explanation traces the phrase back to the militia musters, when every man was expected to appear fully equipped and armed, when in rank and file, “facing the music.” The book says that “the meaning of the phrase is generally ‘to show one’s hand,’ although it is often used as a summons to pay the bill. It was employed by the novelist Cooper.”

Fairy Gold

“Fairy gold” or “fairy gifts” is a term applied to gifts that are insubstantial, that do not last. While the fairies are good natured and obliging, you cannot place much dependence upon their gifts. “Fairy money,” for example, is found money, said to be

placed at the spot where it was picked up. Such money is apt to be transformed into dead leaves or grass, according to very ancient belief.

The subject has been a favorite one with poets. In one of the best known of Irish songs, by Tom Moore—the one entitled “Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms,” he wrote of the charms which change, “like fairy gifts fading away.” And another poet wrote of “The one or two who hold earth’s coin of less account than fairy gold.”

Some authorities hold that the fairies are the personification of Providence. In that case, of course, “fairy gifts” would be those conferred on us by Providence.

Fake

The word “fake” has been used for eighty years, at least, in the theatrical profession to express the idea of a makeshift. Thus to “fake a dress” is to get up a costume which is not correct, but which can be made to serve its purpose on a pinch. Costumes of this kind have been called “fakements.”

To “fake a part” is to play it imperfectly, without proper knowledge of its lines. Men much given to this sort of thing were known in the profession as “fakers.” The “fakirs” of India are properly Hindoo ascetics, who belong to strict religious orders, but the term “fakir” is also applied to wandering charlatans, who profit by the villagers’ superstitions to gain nefarious livelihoods.

Authorities say that the word “fakir,” meaning an Indian dervish, is not to be confused with “farker,” meaning a fraud.

Fascism

“Fascism,” the name of the recent Italian political movement, is a true figure of speech, inasmuch as

it is based on the name of the Roman "fasces," the symbol of authority of the Roman magistrates. The fasces consisted of a bundle of rods, having among them an ax, with the blade projecting. There was a long handle, whereby it was borne. The Fascists adopted the name as a symbol of the strength that lies in union and united action.

The word "fasces" is plural, the singular being "fascis," meaning a bundle. The fasces were carried by the lictors before the chief magistrates of Rome, symbolizing their supreme power over the lives of the people. The rods were generally made of birch wood or elm.

Besides being borne before the magistrates, they were also carried before kings and emperors, and in republican times before consuls and prætors. The number of the fasces was not the same in all cases, but varied according to the dignity of the magistrate. Twelve was the number allotted to a consul, and six to a prætor.

Fata Morgana

"The 'fata morgana' which has led men astray in all ages has been the hope of getting something for nothing," says a recent writer.

"Fata Morgana" is a sort of mirage which is seen occasionally in the Straits of Messina, between Italy and Sicily. "Fata" is Italian for a fairy, and the fairy Morgana was the sister of King Arthur and the pupil of the celebrated magician Merlin. She lived at the bottom of a lake, and dispensed her treasures to whom she liked. She is first introduced into the poem, "Orlando Innamorato" as "Lady Fortune," but subsequently assumes her witch-like attitude.

In medieval romance there were women who were known as "Fata," and who were not unlike witches.

In the quality of luring men to their doom they were believed to be not unlike the *ignis fatuus*, or "witches' fire."

Feast of Belshazzar; see *Belshazzar's Feast*.

Feast of Fools

This expression, "feast of fools," means a time when men and women "let themselves go," and forget the cares and sorrows of life in unrestrained mirth and jollity. Many centuries ago the name was given to a grotesque masquerade which had its origin in pagan days, but, despite the solemn banning of fathers of the church and councils, found its way into the ceremonials of the church.

The chief points of the farce lay in the selection of a mock pope, cardinal, patriarch, archbishop, bishop or abbot and this mock dignitary was known by some such name as "Pope of Fools," "Archbishop of Dolts," "Boy Bishop," "Abbot of Unreason" and the like. The "Feast of Fools" maintained itself in some places until the Reformation. The circumstances of the observance were almost infinitely varied, but it was marked everywhere by the same spirit of broad, boisterous drollery, and coarse but not ill-natured caricature.

Feast of the Barmecide; see *Barmecide Feast*.

Feather in Your Cap

A "feather in one's cap" is a mark of distinction or honor, especially when it is gained by one's own exertions. "So you have been elected master of your lodge; that's quite a feather in your cap," said one friend to another.

It is said that the allusion comes from the very general custom, in ancient and modern times, of warriors adding a new feather to their headgear for every enemy slain. The custom prevailed, for

example, among some of the tribes of American Indians, and among the ancient Lycians. In Scotland and Wales it is still customary for the sportsman who kills the first woodcock to pluck out a feather and stick it in his cap. In Hungary, at one time, none might wear a feather in his cap but he who had slain a Turk, the ancient enemy of the Magyars.

Feather, White; see *White Feather*.

Fences, Mending; see *Mending Fences*.

Fernseed

It is a very old English belief, alluded to by Shakespeare and other writers, that whoever carries about with him the seed of the fern thereby renders himself invisible. "We have the receipt of fernseed, we walk invisible," says a character in "Henry IV."

The seed of certain varieties of fern is so small as to be nearly if not quite invisible to the naked eye, and hence the seed itself was believed to confer invisibility on those who carried it about their persons. It was at one time held by the ignorant, and some of the educated as well, that plants have the power of conferring their own properties or specialties on the wearers. Thus, the herb dragon was said to cure the poisonous bites of serpents; the yellow celandine the jaundice; the wood sorrel, which has a heart-shaped leaf, to cheer the heart; liverwort to be good for the liver, and so on. Some of these ancient beliefs still linger in places not thoroughly permeated by education and modern unbelief in such primitive ideas.

Fetish

"It would be difficult to recall any public man who, in aid of his fetish, has violated the canons of good taste so flagrantly," said a recent editorial.

A fetish is something that is expected to work wonders in protecting its owner, or bringing him

good luck. It is an inanimate object which is believed to be possessed of a spirit. Webster's New International Dictionary defines fetish as "a material object, whether natural, as the tooth or claw of an animal, or artificial, as a carving in wood or bone, supposed to possess magical powers or to be endowed with energies or qualities capable of bringing to successful issue the designs of the owner, preserving him from injury, curing disease, etc. The term was originally applied to the crude idols and talismans of the West Africans, but is now applied to similar objects the world over."

In other words, a fetish is something—material or otherwise—in which one has implicit belief.

Fey

The word "fey" (pronounced "fay"), and the idea which it represents, come to us from the Anglo-Saxon days in England. It is an adjective, and describes a person who unconsciously feels upon himself the touch of impending doom, generally death, and acts accordingly. When a person suddenly changes his wonted manner of life, as when a miser becomes liberal, or a churl becomes good humored, he is said by the Scotch to be "fey," and near the point of death.

Sir Philip Gibbs uses the word in his book, "Now It Can Be Told," in a passage in which he says:

"The colonel was in a queer mood. He was a queer man, aloof in his manner, a little 'fey.'"

In Scott's novel, "The Pirate," we find: "She must be 'fey,' and in that case she has not long to live."

Fiasco

A "fiasco" is a complete and ridiculous failure, a "fizzle." The word comes from the Italian and, liter-

ally translated, means a bottle (English, "flask.") Various stories are related to account for this word. It is said that in making Venetian glass, if the slightest flaw in the glass is detected, the glass blower turns the article into a 'fiasco'; that is, into a common flask.

But it is also said that there was once a clever harlequin, or clown, of Florence, named Dominico Biancolelli, noted for his comic monologues. It was his custom to come upon the stage with various articles in his hand, and to improvise song and jokes upon them. One night he appeared holding a flask (a "fiasco"), but failing to extract any humor whatever from his subject he said, "It is thy fault, fiasco," and dashed the flask to the ground. After that a failure was commonly called in Florence a "fiasco."

Fig, Full; see *Full Fig*.

Fig, Not Worth a; see *Not Worth a Fig*.

Filling, see *Backing and Filling*.

Fish, Flesh and Herring

We frequently hear the expression, "Neither fish, flesh nor good red herring," meaning not one thing or another. This goes far back to medieval times, in England, when the relations between the monks and the people were very close.

When we say, "Not fish," we mean "Not food for the monk"; when we say, "Not flesh," we mean, "Not food for the people generally," and by "Nor good red herring" we mean "Not food for paupers." So that anything that is "not fish, flesh, nor good red herring" is nothing at all.

The word "fish" figures in common expressions other than the foregoing. For example, a person who feels himself out of place in his environment, or who is prevented from pursuing his usual employment or pleasures, is said to be like "a fish out of

water." "I have other fish to fry" means, "I have other matters to attend to."

Fits to a "T"

We have all heard or used the expression, "It fits to a T," but not all of us are acquainted with the origin of the phrase.

The expression means, "It fits, or suits, exactly," and is said sometimes to come from the Tee-square, or T-rule, an instrument (so called from its resemblance to a capital "T") used by mechanics and draftsmen, and especially valuable in making angles true, and in obtaining perpendiculars on paper, wood, etc.

"Fits to a T," a phrase in common use today, is not new. It was well known in the English language centuries ago, as is evidenced by the fact that it was employed as long ago as the time of Samuel Johnson, in the eighteenth century. In the famous "Life of Samuel Johnson," by James Boswell, the latter quotes Johnson as saying, "You see they'd have fitted him (Warburton) to a T."

Flea in One's Ear

When you "put a flea" in a person's ear, or send him away with a flea in his ear, you give him a reply that he is not looking for, and one that he does not expect or care for. A dog which has a flea in the ear is very restless, and runs off in distress or actual terror. He has a bad situation to meet, as has a man in whose ear a flea has been put. An editorial writer said that President Coolidge "put a flea in the ear" of a state delegation which wanted him to appoint a certain man to a position in his cabinet, instead of the man whom he had selected.

A "mere flea bite" is an expression used to denote

something that is quite unimportant, as the bite of a flea, which may cause temporary inconvenience, but is soon forgotten. A soldier might refer to a slight wound as a "flea bite."

Fleece, Golden; see *Golden Fleece*.

Fleet Marriages

Referring to a recent marriage which filled many columns of newspaper space, an editorial writer called it a "Fleet marriage," because it was performed by a civic official instead of a clergyman.

"Fleet marriages" were clandestine marriages, at one time performed without banns or licenses by needy chaplains, in the Fleet Prison, London. As many as thirty marriages a day were sometimes celebrated in this disgraceful manner; and we are told by olden records that 2,954 were registered in the four months ending with February 12, 1705.

Before the passing of the English marriage act, in 1754, a common notion prevailed that the solemnization of a marriage by a person in holy orders rendered it indissoluble. This erroneous idea, doubtless, arose from the fact of marriage by civil contract being valid in some cases, while in others its performance in the church was indispensable.

Flesh, Fish and Herring; see *Fish, Flesh and Herring*.

Flesh Pots

We owe this figure of speech, as we owe so many others, to the Bible, whence come some of the best and most common of our popular sayings. In the sixteenth chapter of the Book of Exodus, verses 2 and 3, we read how the children of Israel regretted their deliverance from Egypt because they had to endure hardships in the wilderness. We read:

"And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the

wilderness; and the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

To yearn for the flesh pots means to long for the material good things of life.

Fly in the Ointment

It is rare indeed to find a perfectly happy person, since there is always a "fly in the ointment"—that is, there is always something, however trifling, to mar our enjoyment of life. One authority defines "the fly in the ointment" as "the trifling cause that spoils everything."

The origin of this figure of speech is Biblical. In the first verse of the tenth chapter of Ecclesiastes we find:

"Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour; so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor."

The fly occurs in many figurative expressions in English. To crush a fly on the wheel means to make a great matter of one that is of little moment. A fly on the coach wheel means one who fancies himself of great importance, but who really amounts to as little as the fly in the old story which sat on a coach wheel and said, "See what a dust we are kicking up!"

Flying Dutchman

The Flying Dutchman is a spectral ship which is said to be seen off the Cape of Good Hope in stormy weather forever trying to round the cape, but never succeeding. She brings misfortune to any vessel that sees her, it is said.

Sir Walter Scott says that the Flying Dutchman was originally a ship laden with precious metal. A horrible murder was committed on board, the plague broke out among the crew, and no port would permit her to enter, so she was doomed to sail forever. There is a more common form of the legend which declared that the ship must beat forever against head winds because her master swore impiously that he would round the cape in spite of God or the devil. Therefore, the ill-fated ship wanders over the stormy waters like a ghost, doomed to be forever beaten by wind and wave and never to find rest.

Several novelists of the sea have used the legend of the Flying Dutchman as a basis for stories.

Fools, Feast of; see *Feast of Fools*.

Fools' Gold

Anything that leads one on a wild-goose chase for wealth may be termed "fools' gold." It is also the popular name that is applied to a group of minerals known to mineralogists as "pyrites," which resemble gold ore in appearance, and which have often been mistaken for that ore. The early settlers of Virginia, mistaking pyrites for gold ore, sent a shipload of it to London, to the great disgust of the London Company.

The name "pyrites" comes from the Greek, and means "a mineral which strikes fire." It belonged originally to the sulphuret of iron, known as iron pyrites, and was given to it in consequence of its striking fire with steel, so that it was used for kindling powder in the firing pans of muskets before the use of gunflints was introduced. It is now used in the manufacture of sulphuric acid, and sulphur is obtained from it by sublimation. Among other varieties of pyrites are copper and nickel pyrites.

Fool's Paradise

One who lives in a "fool's paradise" deceives himself as to his hopes or expectations. A good example of such a person is Dickens' Mr. Micawber, who was always waiting for something to turn up.

While "fool's paradise" means, nowadays, the mental condition of a person who indulges in vain hopes and delusive expectations, in the olden days it meant, also, something different. It was synonymous with "limbo" or "limbus."

According to the old schoolmen, the theologians of the Middle Ages, there were three places where persons not good enough for Paradise were admitted: 1, the "limbus patrum," for those good men who had died before the death of Christ; 2, the "limbus infantum" (or Paradise of unbaptized children); 3, the "limbus fatuorum," or Paradise of fools, and others who were not mentally alert and who, therefore, sinned without intent.

Forbidden Fruit

"Forbidden fruit" is, according to Webster's New International Dictionary, any coveted, unlawful pleasure, so called with reference to the forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden." (See the third chapter of the Book of Genesis.)

According to the Mohammedan wise men, the forbidden fruit that was eaten by Adam and Eve was not the apple, as is believed in Christian countries, but the banana or Indian fig. The reason assigned for this belief is that when the eyes of the guilty pair were opened as a result of their disobedience, "they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons" (Genesis iii:7.)

There has been much discussion concerning the exact site of the Garden of Eden, in which grew the

tree that bore the forbidden fruit. Recent discoveries have shown that "Edin" was the Sumerian name for the plain of Babylon; at the south end of it was the city of Eridu, and near it a beautiful garden containing the Tree of Life.

Forlorn Hope

When things look especially blue, and you have recourse to a desperate chance, you are said to put your trust in a "forlorn hope." It is a case of "do or die."

The expression, "forlorn hope" is used also of a body of men sent out to attempt some desperate undertaking. According to Professor Skeat, it is applied to a body of men especially chosen to lead the way in some dangerous warlike enterprise and is derived from the Dutch "de verlooren hoop," meaning a lost band or troop. The French equivalent is "enfants perdus" ("lost children"). The name is given on account of the extreme peril to which the leaders of such a party are necessarily exposed.

In a report of Oliver Cromwell we find the sentence, "Our forlorn of horse marched within a mile of the enemy"—that is, our horse picket sent forward to reconnoiter approached within a mile of the enemy's camp.

Forty Immortals

This is a name that is given to the members of the French Academy, because those who belong to it are elected for life and the Academy is a self-perpetuating body—that is, all vacancies are filled by the votes of those already members. Election to the Academy is a great honor and is reserved for Frenchmen who have achieved eminence in literary work, music, military achievement, statesmanship and other fields of high endeavor.

Some of the greatest Frenchmen of modern times have been elected to the Academy, but, of course, others whose friends believed them entitled to the distinction have failed of election. Naturally, the satirists and humorists of France have not spared the august Academy at times, but nevertheless it holds a high place in the life of France.

Originally, the French Academy was formed to set up a standard of purity for the French language. Among the members elected in recent years have been Marshals Foch and Joffre and Georges Clemenceau.

Fountain of Youth

Probably everyone has heard or read of the Fountain of Youth, wherein he or she who bathes find again the lost and eagerly desired years of young happiness. Especially familiar is the tale to the student of American history, who is told that it was the quest of the Fountain of Youth that led Ponce de Leon to the discovery of Florida.

The reported existence of a valley far in the northern country, which was said to have a perfect climate all the year around, with just the proper amount of sunshine and rain to make life happy, and nothing to mar its joys, led a recent writer to say, "In America such a vale is connected more or less loosely with two most picturesque myths—one the legend of 'El Dorado,' the other the tradition of the 'Fountain of Youth.'"

In the early days of the knowledge of America by Europeans, it was a widespread belief on the other side of the ocean that this side possessed a magical fountain which could restore youth. Some said that it was to be found in the Bahama Islands.

Four Hundred

We do not hear much nowadays about the "Four Hundred," because the phrase has fallen into disuse, but still there is occasional reference to it. Once in a while we read or are told that So-and-so does or does not belong to "the 400."

The phrase was used in the year 1889, by Ward McAllister, at that time the leader of New York society. Preparations were being made for the celebration of the centenary of the inauguration of Washington as first president of the United States, and the question of issuing invitations to the great receptions, and the like, arose. Then Ward McAllister achieved national prominence by announcing that there were only about four hundred persons actually "in society" in New York. The phrase "Four Hundred," almost immediately "caught on," and swept the country like wildfire. Later, however, about 1904, the late Mrs. William Astor, acknowledged leader and *grande dame* of New York society, raised the number to eight hundred by inviting that number of guests to her annual ball.

Fourth Estate

The name, "fourth estate," is applied to the newspaper press. A good explanation of the term was given by "The Lexicographer," in the "Literary Digest," who said:

"The term, 'the fourth estate' is used to designate the newspaper press as a distinct power in the state presumably from the license it exercises, the liberties it enjoys, or the power it wields. The origin of the term was credited by Carlyle to Burke—'there were three estates in Parliament but in the reporters' gallery yonder there sat a fourth estate more important far than they all.' (see 'Heroes and

Hero Worship,' Lecture V). But the statement is not recorded in Burke's published works. Carlyle's work was published in 1840, but in the 'Edinburgh Review' in 1828, Macaulay used the phrase in his essay on Hallam's 'Constitutional History,' in the eighth paragraph from the end: 'The gallery in which the reporters sat has become a fourth estate of the realm.' By the first three estates in the Parliament were meant the lords spiritual, the lords temporal and the commons."

Frankenstein

Something that turns upon its maker and destroys him without mercy is called a Frankenstein's monster—sometimes, not correctly, a "Frankenstein." A group of men conspire to overthrow a government, and their own followers turn against them—they are said to be victims of their own work, as Frankenstein was.

He was, in a romance written by Mrs. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, wife of the famous poet, a medical student who conceived the idea of constructing a human being from fragments of men picked up from churchyards and dissecting rooms. This creature was imbued with life by means of electricity. The story tells how the monster longed for sympathy, but was shunned by everybody. It was only animal life, a parody on man and powerful for evil, and in the end it killed its creator.

Free Lances

The name "free lances" is applied to those who hold "roving commissions" in any line, especially in literature. "Free lance" writers are those who are not attached regularly to any publication or publishing house, and submit their work to various publishers.

In the Middle Ages, after the crusades, free lances were roving companies of knights, etc., who wandered from place to place and sold their services to anyone who would pay for them. They were called sometimes "free companies," and the harsher term "mercenaries" is applied to them. In Italy they were called "condottieri."

We run across the name "free lances" in recent English political history. These "free lances" were the members of the so-called "Fourth party," a small knot or clique of Conservatives in the English House of Commons, who made themselves especially obnoxious to Mr. Gladstone in 1883-4. They were headed by Lord Randolph Churchill.

French Leave

To "take French leave" means to leave in haste, or secretly—especially when one is in debt. There are at least two stories to account for the saying. One holds that in the eighteenth century some of the society folk in France adopted the rather rude custom of leaving a reception without taking leave of the host or hostess.

Another account tells us that in the olden days the French armies on their marches had the custom of taking whatever they wished for or required "without leave"—that is, without payment or any other consideration.

Naturally, the French resent this reflection on their nation, and they retort by calling a creditor an "Englishman." When a man is asked to go to a theatre or a café, and cannot do so because of lack of funds, he says, "Je suis Anglais" ("I am 'broke'").

Friday, Black; see *Black Friday*.
Fruit, Forbidden; see *Forbidden Fruit*.

Full Fig

In a newspaper account of a social function in a suburban town, we read: "All the leading members of the country club were there in full fig."

The expression, "in full fig," means in full dress. On good authority it may be said that we get it from the Italian phrase, "in fioccho," which means "in gala dress." An English woman writer describing a religious festival in Rome said: "The Pope's throne was set out for mass, and the whole building was in perfect 'fiocchi.'"

However, another origin for the phrase, "in full fig," was suggested by a contributor to the English publication, "Notes and Queries," who said that it may have been taken from the words "in full fig." (or figure) in fashion books. Trollope, the English novelist, wrote in one of his books that "the Speaker sits at one end all in full fig, with a clerk at the table elbow."

Furies

The Furies were three minor deities of Greek mythology. They were the embodiment of remorse, and punished the crimes of those who had escaped from or defied public justice. In this way the ancients showed their recognition of the fact that although evildoers sometimes escape the just punishment of their acts at the hands of man, a higher power avenges the wrong.

According to some accounts the Furies (who are called also the Erinyes or Eumenides) avenge the violation of the laws of piety, hospitality, etc., and inflict punishment upon those who are guilty of perjury or homicide. In very ancient days the Furies were also the embodiment of the avenging powers of nature, and later they were represented as women

with serpents twined about their heads instead of hair.

Galaxy

Taken literally, the word "galaxy" means the Milky Way, the splendid, luminous belt of innumerable stars which may be seen, on a clear night, stretching in a great arc from horizon to horizon. But the word is also used, frequently, in a figurative sense, as in the phrases, "a galaxy of wit," "a galaxy of beauty," "a galaxy of fashion," etc. Then it means a distinguished assemblage or gathering of people, all marked by the trait mentioned. There was formerly an American magazine called "The Galaxy," which had for its ambitious aim the assembling of contributions from many of the most distinguished writers of its time.

The heavenly galaxy surrounds the whole earth in what is almost a great circle. For some 150 degrees the zone spreads out into two branches—one shining, the other dull and disconnected—which eventually reunite. To the naked eye the stars seem merged in one broad stream of light.

Gallery Gods

Those who sit on high in a theatre are the "gods," or, sometimes, "the gallery gods." Like the deities on high Olympus, they sit enthroned to pass judgment on what goes on below them.

In many of the theatres of an elder day, the uppermost gallery, nearest the ceiling, was generally painted to represent the sky. Naturally, those who sat in the sky, or near it, became known as "gods."

Akin to the term "gallery gods" is "playing to the gallery." (Sometimes we see it as "playing with one eye on the gallery.") This means to seek popu-

larity, as when an actor sacrifices his ideals for popular applause, or when a political speaker "orates" to catch votes.

Galore

B. C. Forbes, the well known writer on financial topics, said :

"Jacksonville, with every facility at hand, doesn't raise its own poultry or eggs, but ships them galore from Tennessee and other states."

The word "galore," which is pronounced in two syllables, to rhyme with "store," "more," etc., means in abundance, or plentifully. The dictionary says that its use is chiefly colloquial, meaning that it is found mainly in common, every-day speech, and not in literary language, but it is not uncommon in the works of careful writers. Some authorities call "galore" a sea term, meaning that it is used chiefly by sailors; a rhymster wrote, "For his Poll he had trinkets and gold galore, besides of prize money quite a store."

"Galore" is said by the dictionary makers to be derived from the Gaelic words, "gu leor," meaning "enough" or from the Irish word "golear," which is the same thing in a slightly different form.

Garcia, Message to; see *Message to Garcia*.

Gargantuan

To have a Gargantuan appetite means to eat and drink so voraciously that the greatest delight in life is found in the satisfaction of one's appetite. The expression is taken from the famous book by Rabelais, the great French writer of the sixteenth century. Gargantua is the name of the hero of his romance of the same name. He is the giant son of a giant father, Grandgosier. Gargantua has

many extravagant adventures, which are related in the book.

Of course, Gargantua is a purely imaginary character, but his adventures, as related by Rabelais, form a satire on the life and culture of the times of the author. The book has been strongly condemned, but Professor Dowden, the English critic, says of Rabelais that "below his laughter lay wisdom; below his orgy of grossness lay a noble ideality; below the extravagance of his imagination lay the equilibrium of a spirit sane and strong."

Gauntlet, Running the; see *Running the Gauntlet*.

Gay Lothario

The name "Lothario," or the title, "a gay Lothario," is often applied to a man who trifles with the affections of women, one who is a libertine. The designation is used very frequently.

The original was a character in a play. "The Fair Penitent," by Nicholas Rowe, an English playwright. It was produced in 1703. Rowe took his tragedy from an earlier play, "The Fatal Dowry," by Philip Massinger, a contemporary of Shakespeare, but the name "Lothario" was "lifted" from Davenant's "Cruel Brother," produced in 1630, in which there is a similar character with the same name.

Besides these uses of "Lothario," to designate a man without principle so far as women were concerned, the name is found also in Cervantes' story, "Don Quixote" and in Goethe's "Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre."

In "The Fair Penitent," there is to be found the line, "Is this that haughty, gallant, gay Lothario?"

Geese, see *All My Swans are Geese*.

Geese and the Capitol

In France, at the time when the Senate was deliberating over the financial proposals of the Government, an article in the "Temps" of Paris was headed, "Too Many Geese at the Capitol." An American newspaper said that "their cackling was not of the kind that saves the nation."

The famous geese that saved a nation were Roman. The tradition tells us that when the Gauls invaded Rome, a detachment of them, in single file, clambered up the hill of the Capitol so silently that the foremost man reached the top without being challenged; but while he was striding over the rampart some sacred geese, disturbed by the noise, began to cackle and aroused the garrison.

The invaders were repulsed and, to commemorate the saving of the nation by the geese, the Romans carried a golden goose in procession to the Capitol every year for many years.

Gentle Craft

An author told of a shoemaker, or cobbler, who had educated himself by perusing books while working with hammer and needle and awl at his bench, and said, "It is not astonishing, for is he not a member of what was dubbed centuries ago 'the gentle craft'?"

The expression, "gentle craft," to describe the trade of the shoemaker, is very ancient. According to one authority, it arose from the fact that in an old romance a prince of the name of Crispin is made to exercise the trade of Crispin in honor of his namesake, Saint Crispin. The latter worked as a shoemaker while he was preaching the Gospel. He did this so that he might not be beholden to anyone for a livelihood.

Another story tells that King Edward the Fourth of England, who was a good deal of a "hail fellow well met," once, when he wanted to unbend, joined a party of shoemakers in a drinking bout. It is said that he pledged them, and therefore, because of such royal recognition and honor, shoemakers were called thereafter members of a gentle or noble, craft.

Getting into a Scrape

Everyone gets into a "scrape," at times, but not everyone knows whence we derive the term. Various accounts of its origin are given, but probably the best of them is the following:

Deer are addicted, at certain seasons, to dig up the land with their forefeet, in holes, to the depth of a foot, or even of half a yard. These are called "scrapes." Tumbling into one of these "scrapes" is sometimes done at the cost of a broken leg; hence, a man who finds himself in an unpleasant position, from which extrication is difficult, is said to have "got into a scrape."

Another version says that in Scotland a rabbit's burrow is known as a "scrape," and if a golf ball gets into such a hole it can hardly be played, and the player finds himself also in a "scrape."

Getting the Mitten

"Getting the mitten" is not a pleasant experience, as any man can testify who has been jilted. The phrase is an Americanism; it is used when a young man is discarded by the lady whom he has been courting. Sam Slick, the old-time Canadian writer, said: "There is a young lady I have set my heart on; though whether she is a-goin' to give me hern, or give me the mitten, I ain't quite satisfied."

Some say that we get the phrase from the fact

that anyone seeking to hold a hand encased in a mitten may find that he is holding the mitten only, and not the hand, if the wearer of the mitten so chooses. Others say, however, that "getting the mitten" is derived from the Latin word "mittere," to send, and that it is the only remaining use of the old English word "mittent," sending, which is obsolete.

Ghost Walks

When the ghost walks everybody is happy, because it means that pay day is at hand. The phrase originated in the theatrical world, but has now spread into popular usage. The story of its start is related as follows:

"In one of the traveling theatrical companies of England the manager, himself an actor, was very fond of playing the title rôle in "Hamlet." Salary day came and went, but as the manager had no bank account, and as the receipts were meager, no cash for the players was forthcoming. At last patience ceased to be a virtue, and the company became clamorous for its pay.

"A strike was organized, and at one of the rehearsals of 'Hamlet,' when Hamlet, speaking of the ghost, exclaimed, 'Perchance 'twill walk again,' the leader of the strike, who happened then to be cast for the part of the ghost, ignored Shakespeare's text and shouted, 'No, I'm hanged if the ghost walks any more until our salaries are paid!'"

Gift of Cordelia, see Cordelia's Gift.
Gifts, Greek; see Greek Gifts.

Gilderoy's Kite

"There goes my game, higher than Gilderoy's kite," said a chess player when he saw that he had

made a move which meant the certain loss of the game to him.

To be hanged "higher than Gilderoy's kite" means to be punished more severely than the very worst criminal. The greater the crime, the higher the gallows, was at one time a practical legal maxim. Haman, it will be remembered, was hanged on a very high gallows, while the one on which the Marquis of Montrose suffered punishment, in Edinburgh, in 1643, was thirty feet high.

Gilderoy was a famous robber, who robbed Cardinal Richelieu and Oliver Cromwell. There was a Scotch robber of the same name in the reign of Queen Mary. Both were noted for their handsome persons, and both were hanged. The old saying had it that Gilderoy was hanged so high he looked like a kite in the sky.

Gilead, see *Balm in Gilead*.

Glass Houses

We all know the saying, "Those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones"—meaning that one should avoid criticizing others unless one is quite sure of being above criticism in the same regard. The origin of the saying, as given in some old books, is as follows:

When England and Scotland became united under the crown of James I, in 1603, London was invaded by Scotchmen. There were many of them, and the Englishmen became envious of them. The Duke of Buckingham was a prime favorite with James, but nevertheless led in the movement against the Scots. Parties used to go about nightly breaking the windows of the men from the North, and in retaliation a party of the Scotchmen smashed the windows of the Duke's mansion. This house, or palace, had so many windows that it was called the

"Glass House." Buckingham appealed to the king to punish the offenders, but James told him: "Those who live in glass houses should be careful how they fling stones."

Glasses, Rose-Colored; see *Rose-Colored Glasses*.

Go to Halifax

The expression, "Go to Halifax," originated in the terror with which rogues were once wont to view the law of Halifax, in Yorkshire, England. This law, as may be gathered from a letter of Lord Leicester, quoted by Motley in his "History of the United Netherlands," was that criminals should be "condemned first and inquired upon after."

Halifax lay within the forest of Hardwick, the customary law of which was, that if a felon were taken with 13½ pence worth of goods stolen within that liberty, he should be tried by four burghers from four of the precinct towns, and, if condemned by them, be hanged next market day; after which the case might be sent to a jury. From these facts it can be readily be seen that when it was desired to express the wish that a person might be in a place where he would be dealt with summarily, it was quite appropriate to tell him to "go to Halifax!"

God, Mills of; see *Mills of God*.

God From the Machine

This phrase, "a god from the machine" (more commonly seen in its Latin form, "deus ex machina") means something that is "dragged in by the heels" when a clumsy author finds himself in a difficulty. He calls upon a "god from the machine" to extricate himself—as, for example, when he invents a rich uncle arriving suddenly from India to save someone from going to jail for debt.

The tragic poets of Greece, in conformity with the popular mythological beliefs of their time, instead of bringing about the climax of their plots by natural means, often introduced a god upon the stage. He entered by means of a mechanical contrivance, a "machine," and arbitrarily removed whatever difficulty hindered the proper termination of the piece.

Hence, whenever a person or an incident is introduced arbitrarily in modern tragedy or comedy, merely to remedy some inartistic spot in its construction, such a makeshift is called, figuratively, a "deus ex machina," or "god from the machine."

God Save the Mark; see *Save the Mark*.
 Godiva's Ride; see *Peeping Tom*.

God's Truce

Says an editorial writer: "What the world needs now, and will need for a long time to come, is a sort of 'God's truce,' such as prevailed at certain times in the Middle Ages."

During the Middle Ages a custom prevailed in France and the German Empire, and also for a time in other countries of Europe, whereby for a stated time, and at stated seasons and festivals, the right of avenging wrongs by means of private feuds was suspended. This period was known as "God's Truce," and was brought about by the influence of the church, which endeavored in this way to check the disorganization of the social framework brought about by private feuds.

At the end of the tenth century a council assembled at Limoges, France, at which the princes and nobles bound themselves, by solemn vows, not only to abstain from unlawful feuds, but also to keep the peace mutually toward each other, and to protect from violence all defenseless persons.

clerics, monks, nuns, women, merchants, pilgrims and tillers of the soil. Similiar engagements were entered into at other times.

Gods, Gallery; see *Gallery Gods*.

Gods, Knees of; see *Knees of the Gods*.

Godwin's Oath

"Godwin's oath" is a name that is applied sometimes to a false assertion of innocence, when such assertion is followed quickly or immediately by exposure and punishment by Divine Providence.

The story goes that Godwin, Earl of Kent, was charged with the murder of Alfred, brother of King Edward the Confessor of England, in the eleventh century. Godwin died at the king's table while protesting with an oath his innocence of the crime. He was choked by a piece of bread while beseeching Heaven that it might stick in his throat if he were guilty of the murder.

Hence, the caution that is given sometimes to a person who is taking a voluntary and intemperate oath: "Beware lest you are swearing 'Godwin's oath!'"—that is, beware lest your sin should find you out immediately.

Gog and Magog

Occasionally one sees the names "Gog and Magog" used as designations of twin giants—in politics, statesmanship, finance, literature, etc.

The term is an English one, and is taken from the popular names of two colossal wooden statues in the Guildhall, London. These two statues have taken the places of two older ones, destroyed in the great fire of 1666. The present statues date from 1708. They were formerly borne through the city in the pageant of the Lord Mayor. According to an ancient tale, Gog and Magog were

two giants of the old days in Britain, who, together with another giant named Corineus, fought great battles with other giants who visited to encroach three champions of London were so successful that after a time there were no giants left but themselves, so they fought with one another until only Corineus survived.

Going around Robin Hood's Barn; see *Robin Hood's Barn*.

Going on all Fours

When the expression "goes on all fours" is used, it means that something agrees with something else in every particular. "It does not go on all fours" means, according to one authority, "It does not suit in every minute particular; it does not fully satisfy the demand; it limps as a quadruped which does not go on all its four legs."

"To go on all fours" means also to crawl about on hands and knees like a child.

There is an old Latin saying that all similes limp, and Macaulay, the English writer, wrote, "No simile can go on all fours." There is a game of cards that is called "all fours." It is so called from the four points that are at stake, namely, "high, low, jack and the game."

Golconda

Throughout the ages there have been regions and cities that have been noted for their boundless wealth, real or imagined. Famous among these places is Golconda, in India. To find a Golconda is to discover a source of infinite riches.

Golconda is a decayed city of India, seven miles west of Haiderabad, in the dominion of the Nizam of Haiderabad. It was once the capital of a powerful kingdom known by the same name (Golconda)

and still possesses a strong fortress, built on a granite ridge, and now used as a state treasure and prison house. It was at one time a famous source of supply for diamonds, which were cut and polished in the city, and it was noted also for the immense mausoleums of its ancient kings.

Gold, Fairy; see *Fairy Gold*.

Gold, Fools'; see *Fools' Gold*.

Gold, Pot of; see *Pot of Gold*.

Golden Age

In the mythologies of most peoples and religions there exists a tradition of a better time, when the earth was the common property of man, and produced simultaneously all things necessary for an enjoyable existence.

The land flowed with milk and honey, beasts of all kinds lived peaceably with others, and man had not yet, by selfishness, pride and other vices and passions, fallen from a state of innocence. The Greeks and the Romans placed this golden age under the rule of Saturn, and many of their poets have turned this poetic material to admirable account, and defined the gradual decadence of the world as the Silver, the Brass and the Iron Ages, holding out at the same time the consolatory hope that the pristine state of things will one day return.

In the histories of various countries, there have been periods of time, which, because of their peacefulness and the prosperity that attended it, have been known as the golden ages of those countries.

Golden Fleece; see *Jason's Quest*.

Golgotha

"If this innovation is adopted and pursued, it may make our politics of a certain order look more

than ever like Golgotha, the place of a skull," says an editorial writer.

Golgotha means, in figurative language, a burial place, a cemetery. As told in St. Matthew, chapter xxvii, verse 33, it is "place of a skull," where Christ was crucified. "Probably," says one authority, "it designated a bare hill or rising ground, having some fanciful resemblance to the form of a bald skull."

The word "Calvary," which is derived from the Latin "calvus," bald, through "calvaria," a bare skull, is a Latin translation of the word "Golgotha," which is Hebrew. According to tradition, Calvary, or Golgotha, is within the walls of the modern Jerusalem, the site being occupied now by the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

Gone Coon

A "gone coon" is a person whose "goose is cooked," one who is "done for." A "gone coon" might as well "throw up the sponge."

The coon that is being hunted for its fur is a "gone coon" when it cannot escape from the hunter. In this connection there is often told the story of Colonel Davy Crockett and the coon. It is said that one day, while out hunting, Crockett treed a coon and drew a bead on it. Thereupon the coon, which had heard stories of Davy's wonderful marksmanship, cried out: "Hello, there, are you Davy Crockett? If you are, don't shoot; I'll come down, because I know I'm a gone coon."

In the old days in American politics Henry Clay was sneered at by the Democrats as "that same old coon," because his followers, the Whigs, had called Martin Van Buren "an old fox."

Good Feeling, Era of; see *Era of Good Feeling*.
Goose, Cooking One's; see *Cooking One's Goose*.

Goose Hangs High

When the goose hangs high, all is well; whence we get the expression, "everything is lovely, and the goose hangs high."

Some say that the expression should read, "The goose honks high." When the geese made their flight near the clouds, and honked as they flew, it was a sign of fair weather, according to ancient belief. From "honks" to "hangs" was an easy change. Others declare, however, that in places where wild geese are shot it is the custom to hang high before the kitchen door the one that is to be roasted for dinner, and the prospective diners seeing it there, exclaim, "The goose hangs high to-day!"

Still others trace the saying back to olden days in England when the cruel sport of goose pulling was in vogue. A live goose was hung by its feet from the limb of a tree. The head and neck were greased. Then men rode their horses at full gallop under the tree and the one who succeeded in pulling down the goose kept it. The signal for beginning the contest was, "The goose hangs high!"

Gordian Knot

To "cut the Gordian knot" means to dispose of a difficulty in a bold, decisive manner. The term comes from the following legend:

Gordius, a peasant of Phrygia, Asia Minor, became king of his country through the intervention of the gods, who declared that a new king would appear riding in a peasant's cart. The new ruler consecrated the yoke of his team to Jupiter, and fastened the yoke to a beam with a rope of bark so ingeniously tied that no one could loosen the knot.

An oracle declared that whoever would untie this

knot would become master of Asia. When Alexander the Great visited the Acropolis at Gordium, in Phrygia, this knot was shown him and the words of the oracle were repeated to him. "I will loosen the knot," said the famous conqueror, and he cut it in two with his sword.

Gossamer

"Light as gossamer" is one of our most common figures of speech, yet there is a lack of knowledge concerning the meaning of the word "gossamer."

Gossamer is a fine, filmy substance something like a cobweb, seen floating sometimes in the air in fine weather, especially in warm weather in autumn. It is the web spun by certain small spiders; the threads are so fine that they are invisible when spun, but a number of them are woven together by the wind, thus making it possible to see them.

The name "gossamer" is derived, it is believed, from the words "goose summer," an ancient term for what is now known in America as "Indian summer," or "Saint Martin's summer." In some parts geese were eaten at that season, whence the name.

Gourd of the Prophet, see *Prophet's Gourd*.

Grace, Coup de; see *Coup de Grace*.

Grain, Against; see *Against the Grain*.

Grain of Salt, see *With a Grain of Salt*.

Grapes, Sour; see *Sour Grapes*.

Gray Mare

Sometimes, when one hears of a household in which "petticoat influence" is dominant—that is, in which the woman holds the upper hand—we hear the expression, "The gray mare is the better horse."

The story goes that a man and his wife once visited a market, where the man desired to buy a horse. He fancied a horse of a certain color, but

his wife took a liking to a gray mare, and insisted so strongly that her choice was the better horse, that the man was obliged to yield against his own judgment.

Macaulay says that he believes the saying, "The gray mare is the better horse," originated in the preference generally given to the gray horses of Flanders over the finest coach horses of England. The French say of a marriage in which the woman is paramount, "It is the marriage of the hawk," because the female hawk is both larger and stronger than the male bird.

Great Cry and Little Wool

The saying, "Great cry and little wool," means the same as the old saying, "Much ado about nothing," used by Shakespeare as the title of one of his plays. It is believed to have reference to an old tale or fable about attempting to shear a hog, in which case there is, of course, "great cry and little wool."

There are many variations of the old proverbial saying, but the true one appears to be the Scottish version, "'Great cry and little wool,' as the soutar said when he clippit the sow." "Soutar" means shoemaker; and the phrase doubtless arose in times when shoemakers were indebted, for the bristles which formed the flexible needles of their craft, to native swine. Until the recent upheavals in Russia, shoemakers' bristles came principally from that country.

According to some writers, the old saying is, "All cry and no wool."

Great Unknown

"Whatever else men may say of him, this much is certain—he will never be a 'Great Unknown' of

literature," said a literary critic of a writer of short stories who was not at all averse to letting the world know his own good opinion of himself.

The "Great Unknown" of literature was Sir Walter Scott, the famous novelist, author of the "Waverley" novels. After Scott, then not yet Sir Walter, had achieved considerable success with his verse, he turned to prose. His first novel was "Waverley," issued anonymously in 1814. It was the forerunner of a large number of similar works. They were read far and wide, and aroused almost as much enthusiasm in France as in England. For some reason which has never been satisfactorily explained, he concealed his name. The novels were so successful, however, that it became impossible to hide the identity of "The Great Unknown."

When his name was openly announced as that of the author of the novels, honors were heaped upon Scott. The royal favor was shown by the conferring of the title of baronet, making him Sir Walter Scott.

Greek Gifts

A "Greek gift" is one that illustrates the old and well known saying, "Nothing for nothing."

One of the best known lines in all literature, both in the original and in translation, is "Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes," from Virgil's "Æneid." This means, "I fear the Greeks even when they bear gifts," and it refers to the famous "gift" of the wooden horse from the Trojans to the Greeks. It will be remembered that the Trojans declared that they offered this famous structure to the gods for a safe return from Troy, but in reality it concealed Greek soldiers who captured the city of Troy.

The idea of "fatal gifts," which are offered treacherously and prove the undoing of their re-

cipients, is common to many of the literatures of the world.

Greek Meets Greek, see *When Greek Meets Greek*.

Green-Eyed Monster

By the "green-eyed monster" is meant jealousy. We read in Shakespeare ("Othello," act ii, scene 3) "O, beware, my lord, of jealousy! It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on." One authority says that as cats, lions, tigers and all the green-eyed tribe "mock the meat they feed on," so jealousy mocks its victim by loving and loathing it at the same time.

It is interesting to note that green is held unlucky to particular clans and counties of Scotland. The Caithness men look on it as fatal, because their bands were dressed in green at the battle of Flodden. It is disliked by all who bear the name of Ogilvy and is especially unlucky to the Grahame clan. One day an aged man of that name was thrown from his horse in a fox chase, and he accounted for the accident by his having a green lash on his riding whip.

Griselda, Patient; see *Patient Griselda*.

Grundy, Mrs.; see *Mrs. Grundy*.

Guam, to Clear for; see *Clear out for Guam*.

Guard, Corporal's; see *Corporal's Guard*.

Guinea Pig

The use of the term "guinea pig" in its figurative sense is not very common in the United States, but it occurs frequently in England. It means a man, generally a nobleman or one of high social station, who permits the use of his name on the list of directors of a stock company, in order to lend false prestige to the company and thus make it easier to dispose of the company's securities—which are often,

in such cases, more accurately described as "in-securities."

The expression "guinea pig" is a pun; it refers to the fee of one guinea (twenty-one shillings) and luncheon provided for a board of directors when they meet.

"Guinea pigs" are also found in the slang terms of the British Navy. It means midshipmen. "A guinea pig," it is said, "is neither a pig nor a native of Guinea, therefore its name is a proper one to apply to a midshipman, since he is neither a sailor nor an officer."

Hackerston's Cow

"Is this another instance of Hackerston's cow?" asked an editorial writer in discussing a legal case in which the judge was accused of bias and of having a personal interest in the issue.

The reference to "Hackerston's cow" is Scotch. The story goes that a tenant of Lord Hackerston, who was one of the judges of the court of sessions, one day waited on his lordship with a doleful countenance. "My lord," said he, "I am come to inform your lordship of a sad misfortune. My cow has gored one of your lordship's cows, so that I fear it cannot live." "Well, then, you must pay for it." "Indeed, my lord, it was not my fault, and you know that I am a very poor man." "I cannot help that; I say you must pay. I am not to lose my cow." "Well, my lord, if it must be so, I cannot say against your lordship; but stop, my lord, I believe I have made a mistake; it was your lordship's cow that gored mine." "Oh, that is quite a different matter. Go along and don't bother me; I am quite busy."

Hair, Judas-colored; see *Judas-colored Hair*.

Halcyon Days

A time of serenity and happiness, when all is calm and prosperous, is known as "halcyon days." The word "halcyon" is Greek for kingfisher, and is in the original "alkuon."

The ancient Sicilians believed that the kingfisher laid its eggs and incubated for fourteen days, before the winter solstice, on the surface of the sea. During that time, it was thought, the waves of the sea were always unruffled. Some accounts said that the halcyon days were the seven days preceding and the seven days following the winter solstice.

"Amidst our arms as quiet you shall be, as halcyon brooding on a winter's sea," said the poet Dryden. The term, "halcyon days," was formerly favored greatly by editorial writers, but its use is probably not quite so common as it was.

Half Seas Over

The expression, "half seas over," means "half drunk," according to some authorities, while others put the mark further along the road to complete intoxication, and say that "half seas over" means almost "dead drunk."

The dictionary gives no derivation for the term, but says that another meaning is "half way across the sea," thus intimating that it has something to do with seafaring. But Brewer, the English authority on the meanings of words and phrases, says that we get "half seas over" from the Dutch words "op-zee sober," meaning "oversea beer," a strong, heady beverage that was introduced into the Low Countries from England. "Up-zee Freese" is beer from Friesland.

"Half seas over" is not new in English speech, but

dates back as far as the seventeenth century, at least. The poet Dryden wrote, "I am half-seas o'er to death," and Ben Jonson, at a still earlier time, in his play, "The Alchemist" says: "I do not like the dullness of your eye, it hath a heavy cast, 'tis upsee Dutch."

Halifax, Go to; see *Go to Halifax*.
Hamelin, Piper of; see *Pied Piper*.

Hammer and Tongs

A good fight is in prospect when two go at each other "hammer and tongs," as the old saying has it. "If this sort of thing keeps on, there will no longer be talk that the election oratory is dull; with two leaders of the American bar going at each other 'hammer and tongs,' there will be plenty of sparks flying," said an editorial writer.

The phrase is an old one, and implies that the two opponents will beat each other as with hammers, and will be as cross as the two sections of a pair of tongs.

Another figurative phrase in which the hammer plays a part is the one about "going under the hammer." This means "sold at auction," and refers to the custom of the auctioneer giving a tap or bow with his hammer, or mallet, when he accepts a bid and declares, "Going, going, gone!"

Hand, Bird in; see *Bird in the Hand*.

Hand and Seal

When we say in legal phraseology, "under the hand and seal of," we do not mean, as is commonly supposed, "under the handwriting and seal of."

In the olden days, the ability to write was not general, but was limited to well educated persons. Even some of the kings of Europe, until well into the Middle Ages, could not sign their names. When writing was thus limited, documents were authenti-

cated by the impression of the hand dipped in ink, and then the seal was duly appended or affixed. As dipping the entire hand, or even the palm of the hand, in ink was a dirty process, and the result was usually very smudgy, the impression of the thumb alone was substituted.

It is said that many old English and French deeds still exist in which such thumb "signatures" appear. Subsequently, of course, when education became more widespread and writing more common, the signature of the person making the attestation was substituted for the impression of the hand or thumb, and this writing was called "the hand." We often speak of a person's writing a "good hand" or a "poor hand."

Handsaw, Telling a Hawk from; see *Hawk From a Handsaw*.

Hara Kiri

"Unless the President takes immediate and drastic action, he will commit political hara kiri not only upon himself but upon his party," said a writer of editorials.

"Hara kiri," called sometimes "Happy Dispatch," was a curious Japanese system of official suicide, believed to be obsolete since 1868, although isolated cases have occurred since that time. All military men and persons holding civil offices under the Government were bound, when they had committed any offense, to rip themselves open, and thus end lives that had brought disgrace upon their country. "Hara kiri" was committed by cutting open the abdomen by two gashes, in the form of a cross. It might not be done until the offender had received an order from the court to that effect, otherwise their heirs would run the risk of being deprived of their places and property. Not infrequently, upon the death of superiors or masters, the same operation was self in-

flicted by those who desired to exhibit devotion and attachment; sometimes, also, in consequence of a disgrace or affront, it was resorted to when no other resource was left.

Hare, March, Mad as; see *Mad as a March Hare*.

Harpies

There are persons who want everything for themselves, who will "sponge" or prey on others without mercy. They are called "harpies," getting their name from the following account, taken from Greek mythology:

The harpies are vultures with the heads and upper parts of the body of a woman. They are very fierce and loathsome, living in an unchanging atmosphere of loathsomeness and contaminating everything which they come near. They are represented as terribly malign creatures who snatch up and carry off the souls of the dead. Sometimes, acting as the instruments of the vengeance of the gods, they snatch up or defile the food of their victims. These frightful creatures are believed by some writers to be the personification of the rapidity and violence of the whirlwind. According to some accounts, they are three in number.

Hat, Cocked; see *Cocked Hat*.

Hatchet, Burying; see *Burying the Hatchet*.

Hatter, Mad as a; see *Mad as a Hatter*.

Hauling Over the Coals

It's an unpleasant experience, being "hailed over the coals." It means just about the same as being "brought to book"; that is, it means being scolded or brought to account or task for shortcomings. In an account of a recent trial that aroused widespread interest it was recorded that a young man, under fire in court, was "hailed over the coals of his re-

membrance." Sometimes the word "dragged" is used instead of "hauled."

An English authority derives the expression from the custom of the kings of England, and other kings, princes, dukes, counts and the like, of "bleeding" the Jews for money. If they resisted a very common torture was to "haul them over the coals" of a slow fire, to give them a "roasting." In the famous novel "Ivanhoe," by Sir Walter Scott, Front de Boeuf threatens to haul Isaac over the coals.

Havoc, Crying; see *Crying Havoc*.

Hawk From a Handsaw

A person who "knows a hawk from a handsaw" is a "wise one," who is not easily fooled. In a letter to a New York newspaper a man who called himself a "cross-roads banker" said:

"I am well aware that a country man cannot get the attention of a New York editor. But I submit that there is less partisan feeling and more genuine patriotism at the cross-roads than there is in the large cities, and occasionally there may be found a man at the cross-roads who 'knows a hawk from a handsaw.'"

Of course, the use of "to know a hawk from a handsaw" as denoting the possession of wisdom seems rather ridiculous, since anyone can tell a hawk from a handsaw. But not when one learns that "handsaw" is really a corruption of "hernshaw," meaning a heron. To know a hawk from a hernshaw means to be able to distinguish a hawk from a heron, the bird of prey from the game at which it is flown.

Head of Medusa

To look at or to gaze upon the head of Medusa is to invite a terrible fate, indeed, for whoever does so is turned to stone.

Medusa was the chief of the Gorgons, of whom there were three, with serpents instead of hair. Medusa was the only one of the three that was mortal, but so hideous was her face that whoever set eyes on it was instantly turned into stone. She was killed by Perseus, who cut off her head and presented it to Minerva. The Goddess of Wisdom placed the head of Medusa in the center of her shield.

One version of the story has it that Medusa, famous for her hair, presumed to set her beauty above that of Minerva; so the jealous goddess converted her rival's hair into snakes, which petrified the onlooker.

There is a famous painting of Medusa by Leonardo da Vinci. It is called by some critics the masterpiece of the famous Italian.

Heaven, Seventh; see *Seventh Heaven*.

Heck, By; see *By Heck*.

Hecuba, On to; see *On to Hecuba*.

Hedge Parson

A "hedge parson," or "hedge priest" was, in the olden days when so many English phrases were in the making, a poor, wandering preacher, not attached to any of the great houses which came to their downfall at the time of the Reformation. The following story is told of the famous Dean Swift, the author of "Gulliver's Travels" and other works: He said to the Countess of Burlington, wife of one of the great noblemen of the day:

"Lady Burlington, I hear you can sing; sing me a song." She refused, and Swift said: "I suppose you take me for one of your poor hedge parsons; sing when I bid you!"

The use of the word "hedge" to signify vagabond, or inferior, was once common in English; a "hedge writer" was one who wrote for the lowest pay, a

"hedge marriage" was a runaway match, and so forth.

Heel of Achilles; see *Achilles' Heel*.

Heloise; see *Abelard and Heloise*.

Hemlock, Taking the; see *Taking the Hemlock*.

Hercules' Labors

Often we read of someone having performed "a herculean feat," or of having accomplished "herculean labors." It means that he has done something that required extraordinary exertions.

Hercules was a Grecian hero, represented in the ancient stories as possessed of the greatest possible amount of human strength. He was told by the Pythian oracle that if he would obey King Eurystheus in every respect for twelve years he would become immortal. The King imposed on him twelve tasks of great difficulty and danger, and it is these twelve tasks that are known as "The Labors of Hercules."

There is not space to tell them all. Among the most difficult was to kill the Nemean lion, which Hercules strangled, and to cleanse the stables of Augeas, King of Elis, where 3,000 oxen had been confined for many years: this Hercules accomplished in one day by turning into the stables the rivers Alpheus and Peneus.

Herod, to Out-Herod; see *Out-Herod*.

Herring, Flesh and Fish; see *Fish, Flesh and Herring*.

Herring, Red, Over a Trail; see *Drawing a Red Herring Over a Trail*.

Hippocratic Oath

In a graduation season, a newspaper spoke of the graduates of a medical college having taken the "Hippocratic oath." The reference was to "an oath, embodying an admirable code of medical ethics, anciently taken by young men about to begin medical practice, said to have been imposed by Hippocrates

on his disciples." This definition is taken from "Webster's New International Dictionary."

Hippocrates was a celebrated Greek physician, called by some authorities the father of medicine. He lived from about 460 B.C. to about 357 B.C. As a youth he is said to have studied the tablets in the temples of the gods, where each person had inscribed the ailments from which he suffered and the means by which he had recovered. At the beginning of the Peloponnesian War he is said to have saved Athens from a terrible pestilence. He was given the civic privileges of Athens, and rewarded with the golden crown.

Hob Nob

Probably we have all heard, and used, the expression, to "hob nob." It means to meet as cronies, or "pals"; to associate on familiar terms.

To be hob and nob together meant, in the ancient use of the term, "to drink as cronies, to clink glasses." In the old English houses there was a hob at each corner of the hearth for heating the beer, or holding what one wished to keep hot. This was from the verb "habban," to hold. The little round table set at the elbow was called a "nob"; hence to hob nob was to drink snugly and cozily in the chimney corner, with the beer hobbled, and a little nob table set in the snuggery.

There is another old phrase, "to drink hob or nob," or "hob a nob," which means to drink alternately to each other.

Hobson's Choice

"Take this or nothing"—that is "Hobson's choice," which means no choice at all.

Living in Cambridge, England, from about the year 1544 to 1631, was a man named Hobson, whose

first name is given variously as Thomas and Tobias. He was the first man in England to hire out horses. When a customer approached he was led into the stable, where there was a goodly array of beasts. But he was obliged to take the one standing nearest the door, so that every customer was alike well served, according to his chance. It was a case of "first come, first served."

So it became a byword, and has so continued to this day, that when one must take what is offered, without any choice at all, he has only "Hobson's choice."

Hocus Pocus

"It's all hocus pocus." Probably every reader has heard or has used the expression. We all know what it means—"nonsense, generally intended to deceive."

Nobody seems to know just where we got the expression "hocus pocus." Some writers assert that it is a corruption of the Latin, "hoc est corpus," meaning, "here is the body." Others call attention to a man named "Ochus Bochus," believed to have been a Norse magician in the very olden days, and say that magicians use the words "hocus pocus" just before performing a trick that is intended to deceive the public.

The words are also connected in some way with the word, "hoax," which means to fool, to deceive.

Holding a Candle

"Why, he can't hold a candle to the other fellow!" said a voter, referring to the respective merits of two candidates. He meant that one was so far superior to the other that there could be no comparison.

It is believed that we get the expression from the

old custom of hiring link boys to hold candles in theaters and other places of amusement. In the eighteenth century Dean Swift wrote the famous couplet, "Others say that Mr. Handel, to Bononcini can't hold a candle."

There is an old saying, "to hold a candle to the devil," which means to give aid or countenance to that which is known to be wrong. This is said to come from the practice in some churches of burning candles before the images of saints, carrying them in funeral processions, and placing them on the altars. Shakespeare makes Jessica say, in "The Merchant of Venice," "What, must I hold a candle to my shame?"

Holiday, Roman; see *Roman Holiday*.

Homeric Laughter

Loud, boisterous laughter, that cannot be controlled or repressed, and is irresistible by the hearer, is called, sometimes, "Homeric laughter." For example, Van Loon, the historian, said in a letter to a newspaper, "What Homeric laughter would resound if the good citizens of Genoa were to ask for all the countries discovered by one of their countrymen?"

The reference is to a passage in the famous "Iliad," of Homer, Book I, verse 599. This epic, the world's most famous poem, was written, it is generally held by critics, about eleven centuries before Christ, but the date has been a subject of much controversy, as well as the authorship. Commentators have not been wanting to say that there was no such man as Homer, and that the works attributed to him were written by various hands. However, others hold that so long ago, when there was no hereditary literature, there may have arisen one supreme genius

near whom none can be placed in the world's literature save Shakespeare and Dante.

Honor, Affair of; see *Affair of Honor*.

Honorable Amende; see *Amende Honorable*.

Hook or Crook, see *By Hook or by Crook*.

Hood's, Robin, Barn; see *Robin Hood's Barn*.

Hope, Forlorn; see *Forlorn Hope*.

Horns of a Dilemma

A dilemma is an argument which represents two sides, "horns," for choice; whichever you choose, you lose. One author says that it is "a difficulty of such nature that whatever way you attack it you encounter an equal amount of disagreeables." The "horns" of a dilemma is a figure of speech taken from a bull, which tosses with either of his horns.

Probably the most famous of the dilemmas is that illustrated by the story of a young rhetorician who applied to an old sophist in Greece for instruction in logic and argument. "Teach me to plead," he said, "and I will pay you when I gain a cause." The master had to sue for payment, and the scholar endeavored to evade the claim by a dilemma. "If I gain my cause," he said, "I need not pay you, because the judge's award will be against you, and if I lose it I am not bound to pay you, by the terms of our contract." The master argued, however, "if you win you must pay me by the terms of the agreement, and if you lose the court will compel you to pay me."

Horse, Dark; see *Dark Horse*.

Horse, Wooden; see *Wooden Horse*.

Horseback, Beggar on; see *Beggar on Horseback*.

House of Glass; see *Glass Houses*.

Houssain, Prince, Carpet of; see *Magic Carpet*.

Howling Dervishes

"Howling dervish" is a term applied sometimes to a person who makes a great hullabaloo about his beliefs; for example, a political writer speaks about

"turning every lukewarm radical into a howling dervish shouting for cautious conservatism."

Dervishes are Mohammedan priests or monks, of various orders. Some years ago a writer described the "howling dervishes" as follows:

"Their peculiar religious exercises consist in the recitation of the power and attributes of Allah to the accompaniment of a rocking motion of their bodies. During their prayers and chants they put an energetic emphasis on the word 'Allah,' whenever it occurs, yelling it out at the highest pitch of their vocal organs. This is kept up until they fall, panting and foaming, to the ground. Sometimes they wound themselves with knives or sharp stones, but it is remarked that there is sufficient method in their madness to keep them from inflicting serious wounds. They are known also as "dancing dervishes."

Hub of the Universe

Boston, Mass., is the "Hub of the Universe," according to some of its devoted citizens. They got the city's appellation from Oliver Wendell Holmes, although the poet applied the name not to the city itself, but to its famous State House.

Holmes says, in "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," that "the Boston State House is the hub of the solar system; you couldn't pry that out of a Boston man if you had the tire of all creation straightened out for a crowbar."

It is interesting to note that other cities have laid claim to the title of "the center of things." For example, the Romans said boastfully that "all roads lead to Rome." In 1876, when the Prince of Wales (afterward King Edward VII) visited Calcutta, the correspondent of a London paper said, "Calcutta

swaggers as if it were the hub of the universe, the veritable salt of the earth."

Hue and Cry

Although the phrase "hue and cry" meant originally, as defined in Webster's New International Dictionary, "a loud outcry with which felons were anciently pursued," it is used now to indicate any great disturbance, as is seen in the following quotation: "There will undoubtedly be a great hue and cry when the details reach Germany, in the effort to prove why the plan is in every respect unacceptable."

In the olden days, when a "hue and cry" was raised after a criminal, it became the duty of all honest men to join in the pursuit. In later times a hue and cry meant also a written proclamation for the capture of a malefactor or the recovery of stolen goods. In England the name is given also to an official gazette containing information as to crimes and criminals.

The word "hue" is derived from the French "huer," meaning "to shout," and is obsolete save in the phrase "hue and cry."

Human Derelicts

Sociologists and other writers frequently refer to "human wrecks," men or women who have lost their places or their bearings in society, and are adrift from their moorings, with seemingly no hope of getting back, as "derelicts."

It is a law term, and denotes any property which the owner has deserted or wilfully cast away. It is applied most commonly to a ship abandoned by the captain and crew. According to English law, which preceded American law and serves largely as a model for that of the states, the first comers to a wreck may claim salvage from the crown or from the per-

sons who have a right to unclaimed derelicts. Land that has been reclaimed from the sea is termed "derelict" (that is, "forsaken" by the sea) and belongs either to the owner of the adjoining lands, supposing that it is given up gradually, or to the crown (that is, the state) in case of a sudden and considerable recession of the sea affecting a large body of land.

Humanities

There has been much talk in pedagogical circles and elsewhere, for many years, about the "decline of the humanities." It is asserted sometimes that the "humanities" are not declining, but are as much favored as ever by students.

"Humanities" is the name given to those studies comprising academical learning, such as languages, rhetoric, poetry, grammar, the ancient classics and the like, as are distinguished from scientific studies, economics, etc. Sometimes the "humanities" are called "belles lettres."

"The cultivation of the languages, literature, history and archæology of Greece and Rome was very commonly called 'literae humaniores,' or, in English, 'the humanities,' by way of opposition to 'letters divine,' or divinity," says one writer.

Humble Pie

When one "eats humble pie," one "comes down off one's perch," as the saying goes—or, in plain English, acknowledges that one has been in the wrong.

The phrase is really a pun on the word "humble." It comes, probably, from the old English word "humbles" or "umbles," meaning the heart, liver and entrails of the deer, which were anciently regarded as the perquisites of the huntsman. While the

haunch and the other choice parts of the carcass went to the table of the lord and lady of the manor, the "umbles" were made into a pie or pasty for the humble huntsman and other servants.

Other phrases with similar meaning to "eating humble pie" are "to eat crow" and "to eat dirt."

Humbug

For many years, in the olden days, Ireland was flooded with issues of counterfeit money, but none was to be compared for worthlessness with that made by King James II at the mint in Dublin. It was composed of any material on which he could lay his hands, such as lead, pewter, copper and brass, and so low was its intrinsic value that twenty shillings of it were worth only twopence sterling.

James's opponent, William III, ordered a few days after the battle of the Boyne that the crown piece and the half-crown should be taken as one penny and one half-penny, respectively. The soft mixed metal of which that worthless coin was made was known among the Irish as "uim bog," pronounced "oom bug" and meaning "soft copper"; that is, worthless money. In the course of time the word or words "uim bog" became our modern "humbug," meaning an imposition or sham or fraud, or something that is worthless.

Humphrey, Duke; see *Dining With Duke Humphrey*.

Hunkers

The "hunkers" of a political party are those hide-bound conservatives who stick closely to old ideas, and are obstinately opposed to progress. The name was applied originally to some members of the Democratic Party in New York States, many years ago. In general, it may be said that a "hunker" is equivalent to a "fogy" or "old fogy."

Originally, it is said, the name "hunkers" was applied to men who were in possession of the "hunks" or "chunks" of political office, or the "spoils of war." However, it is possible that the designation may be traced to the same origin as "hunks" or "old hunks," meaning a cranky, surly, bad-tempered man, or miser.

In some parts of Scotland and the United States, to hunker means to squat so as to be supported by the front part of the feet; to crouch.

Hunt's Dog

"Hunt's dog" is an old name that is applied sometimes to a tricky, self-willed person, who insists on having his own way, and who can be neither led nor driven into a course contrary to his own stubborn opinion.

The story goes that one Hunt, who was a laboring man in Shropshire, England, kept a mastiff which, on being shut up while his master went to church, howled and barked so terribly that he disturbed the whole congregation. Of course, both the preacher and the worshippers entered objection to the noise. Thereupon, the owner of the animal decided to take the animal with him on the following Sunday, hoping thereby to still his noise. But when they reached the dooryard the dog positively refused to enter, and the dilemma of his owner became worse than ever.

Hustings

To speak "on the hustings" means to make political addresses, to seek the favor of the electorate. Not long ago a newspaper praised a Presidential candidate for his skill "in public speaking on the hustings."

"Hustings" means, in its original derivation,

"house things" or city courts. London still has its Court of Hustings, in Guildhall, in which are elected the Lord Mayor, the aldermen and City members of Parliament. The hustings of elections are so called because, like the Court of Hustings, they are the places of elective assemblies. In Virginia, which has interesting survivals of ancient customs and names, there are local courts which are called "hustings courts."

In one of Tennyson's poems he says, "When the rotten hustings shall shake, in another month, to his brazen lies."

Icarus, Icarian; see *Dædalus and Icarus*.

If the Cap Fits

"If the cap fits you, put it on," means, "If you think that a remark made applies to you, why, you are at liberty to take it as so meant." Sometimes, telling a man that the cap fits him is an invitation to a fight. In explaining the remark, one writer says: "Hats and caps differ very slightly in size and appearance, but everyone knows his own when he puts it on."

The word "cap" figures in many English phrases. For example, "I must put on my thinking cap" means, "I must give the matter serious consideration." All the ladies know what is meant by "setting one's cap." The lady puts on her best cap, figuratively speaking, to attract the attention and admiration of the one she is trying to get for a sweetheart or husband. To wait on a man "cap in hand" means to wait on him like a servant, ready to do his bidding. A "feather in one's cap" is something to be proud of.

Iliad of Ills

An "Iliad of ills" means a catalogue or list of evils, and the expression had its rise in the fact

that there is scarcely a calamity in the whole range of human experience that cannot be found in the "Iliad" of Homer. The term means, sometimes, a number of evils occurring at the same time.

The Homeric poem, the Iliad, is the fountain of classic tragedy. It is the tale of the siege of Troy, and is the most famous of the world's epic poems. It has been attributed to Homer, a blind poet of Greece, but authority bends toward the view that it is the work of several hands. The story of the poem is, of course, too long for retelling in a few words. It begins with the abduction of the beauteous Helen, wife of King Menelaus of Greece, by his guest Paris, son of King Priam of Troy, and it ends with the funeral rites of Hector, commander of the Trojan army. It was not until the eighteenth century that the question was raised whether or not the Greek poet Homer, of very ancient date, wrote the two great poems, the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey."

Immortals, Forty; see *Forty Immortals*.
In the Limelight; see *Limelight*.

In the Soup

We don't use or hear the phrase, "in the soup," nowadays, but there was a time, thirty or forty years ago, when it was, literally, in the mouth of every one. Its more modern equivalent is "out of luck." The phrase gained wide currency during the Presidential campaign of 1888. It indicates embarrassment, demoralization, disappointment or defeat—moral, material or political. A defeated candidate for the Presidency was said to be "in the soup"; so were the men who bet on him and lost.

One account of the origin of the phrase is that it first achieved popularity in the Summer of 1888 at a ball game in New York City between the New York and Chicago teams. The members of the

Chicago club made their appearance in full-dress suits, and were dubbed "waiters" by the crowd. (The rules regarding uniforms were not so rigid in those days as they are now.) Chicago suffered a defeat by the score of 19 to 2, whereupon some "fan" yelled out, "The waiters are in the soup!" The phrase "caught on" and spread rapidly.

In the Wrong Box

"In the wrong box" is an expression often used as meaning in the wrong place or position; out of one's place or element, or situated awkwardly, either actually or metaphorically.

Two explanations of the term are given. The first has to do with the printing trade. Type that is set by hand is kept in a case divided into compartments called "boxes." Sometimes a letter gets into the wrong box.

The second explanation tells us that a certain English nobleman was of rather a moody disposition and of restless habits. He used to go to Vauxhall, a place much frequented by society in his time, and frequently said that he always got "in the wrong box," for the folks in those next to which he sat were always merry enough, but he felt dull and melancholy.

Industry, Chevalier of; see *Chevalier of Industry*
Insult, Adding Insult to Injury; see *Adding, etc.*

Intelligentsia

Referring to the action of the State Department in shutting out from the United States the Parsee Communist Saklatvala, a man of a conservative trend of mind wrote:

"All the intelligentsia editorial writers on the uplift weeklies are sore as a goat about it."

The word "intelligentsia" has not reached the

latest dictionaries, although it has been in common editorial use for a decade or two. It means "the members of the intelligent classes" or, if we accept the views of those who think as does the conservative quoted above, those who arrogate all intelligence to themselves. The word had its origin in Russia, and was applied to those educated Russians who opposed the old czaristic régime and who frequently suffered for their political activity by being punished with imprisonment and exile to Siberia. The name was given to them, of course, to distinguish them from the great mass of uneducated and unintelligent Russians.

Iota

"There are many other accords, reports and treaties, laboriously constructed since the armistice, none of which has succeeded in changing the situation an iota," says an editorial writer.

By "iota" is meant a very small quantity, or a very slight degree. The word is the name of the ninth letter of the Greek alphabet, corresponding to the English "i." It is pronounced "eye-oh-tah." It is a very small letter, as written.

The English word "jot," used frequently in the phrase, "not one jot or tittle," is the same as the word "iota," with the "j" substituted for the "i." The letter "j" is a comparative newcomer in the English language, having been used as a consonant only since the seventeenth century. The phrase "not one jot or one tittle" is used in the Bible, in the Gospel of St. Matthew.

Islands of the Blest

Every grown person has longed at times, no doubt, to take ship and sail away from the troubles that seem inseparable from human life. Every one of

us would like to find the "Islands of the Blest," which the Greeks called the "Happy Islands" and the Romans named the "Fortunate Islands."

They are imaginary islands somewhere in the west, where all troubles cease, and to which the favorites of the gods are conveyed at death, there to dwell in everlasting joy. Of course, as the imagination of man is inclined always to color his pictures of the future with the scenes of this world, the "Islands of the Blest" always overflow with the richest and rarest products of nature.

Jack Ketch

"Jack Ketch" is a synonym for a hangman, or executioner. Walt Mason, the whimsical rhymester whose verses have amused many thousands, wrote not long ago, "I read a book with covers red which claims he was a wretch; the one regret, since he is dead, is that he dodged Jack Ketch."

Jack Ketch was the name of a notorious hangman in England in the seventeenth century it is said. In Macaulay's "History of England" we read: "Monmouth then accosted Jack Ketch, the executioner, a wretch who had butchered many brave and noble victims, and whose name has, during a century and a half, been vulgarly given to all who have succeeded him in his odious office."

Some authorities doubt that there was an actual Jack Ketch. They say that the name Jack was applied to all hangmen from Richard Jaquett to whom the manor of Tyburn, famed for its hangings, once belonged.

Jack Robinson

"Before one could say 'Jack Robinson'" means about the same as "quicker than a wink." We do not know much about the origin of this phrase, but

we do know that it is very old. One old English authority says that the saying had its birth from a very volatile gentleman named Jack Robinson, who used to pay flying visits to his friends, and was off again immediately, even before his name was announced. But this explanation is very far-fetched, indeed, because centuries ago an old English play had the couplet:

"A worke it ys as easie to be done
As tys to saye 'Jacke! robys on.'"

That is, "Jack, put your robes on."

According to one account, the original Jack Robinson was a character in a humorous song by an Englishman named Hudson, who combined the vocation of tobacconist with that of professional song writer and singer.

Jackanapes

A "jackanapes" is an impertinent or conceited man or boy, or an upstart. It means, also, in some cases, a vulgar, apish fellow.

According to some authorities, the word first appeared in the English language as a nickname or reproach for William de la Pole, member of a great family of the old English aristocracy, and Duke of Suffolk, who was murdered in 1450. His badge was the clog and chain of a tame monkey. But it appears certain that the word "jackanapes" must have been in use in England before it could have been applied as a nickname.

One account of its derivation says that the first part, Jack, is a name for an ape or monkey, while the second part, "napes," is derived from the Italian city of Naples, the original form being "Jack o' Napes," or "Jack of Naples." But Brewer says it is more likely that the word "Jack" was simply

tacked on to the "napes" or "ape," as the word "jack-ass" was formed.

However, there is a record of monkeys being sent to England from Naples as early as the beginning of the fifteenth century, and it is certain that by the sixteenth century "Jackanapes" was in common use as a name for a pet ape.

James, Truthful; see *Truthful James*.

Jaques, Melancholy; see *Melancholy Jaques*.

Jason's Quest

"The business of any editor's finding brilliance left among the copious writers of to-day is a Jason's quest," says a book reviewer. He meant, of course, that the finding of brilliance was a very difficult task, equal to that of Jason when he went in search of the golden fleece.

Jason is one of the most famous figures of the olden Grecian mythology, and the tale of his search for the golden fleece, with his companions, in the ship "Argo" (whence the voyagers were called the "Argonauts") is well known. The voyage of the Argonauts is believed to mark a sort of separation point between the fabulous and the authentic in Greek history. The finding of the golden fleece, believed by some writers to symbolize the golden rays of the sun, was imposed upon Jason by his uncle Pelias. The fleece was well guarded at Ea, the capital of Colchis, and was promised to Jason by the king of Colchis only on certain most difficult conditions. Although Jason fulfilled these conditions, yet the King of Colchis was unwilling to permit him to take the desired booty. The story of Jason's final triumph is too long for retelling here, even in brief outline.

To go in search of the golden fleece means to seek one's fortune; especially if the road to the for-

tune leads through strange places and amid stirring adventures. (See also "Argonauts.")

Jettison

"Jettison" is a sea term, and means something that is thrown overboard in the effort to lighten a ship, especially when she is in danger of being lost or wrecked. The word is used also as a verb; we say, for example, that the vessel had to jettison most of her cargo in order to be able better to weather a storm. A figurative use of the word is seen in the following: "Evidently the leaders of the party now dominant at the state capital are willing to jettison their principles in order to strengthen their chances of carrying the next election."

The word "jettison" is about the same as "jetsam," used in the familiar phrase, "flotsam and jetsam." "Flotsam" means wreckage from a ship found floating on the water; "jetsam" means, specifically such goods when washed ashore.

Both "jettison" and "jetsam" are derived from an old French word "getaison," meaning a throwing, and this in turn is derived from "jeter," to cast or throw.

Jewels of Cornelia, see *Cornelia's Jewels*.

Jezebel

It is only very rarely that the term "Jezebel," or "daughter of Jezebel" is applied to a woman, since it is a deadly insult. For many centuries "Jezebel" has stood as a symbol of wickedness and depravity almost if not quite beyond description.

Its origin is Biblical. The story of Jezebel (pronounced with the accent on the first syllable, with a short "e") is found in the first and second book of Kings. She was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre, and wife of Ahab, the wicked king of Israel.

She introduced the worship of Baal, persecuted the prophet Elijah, and was instrumental in the murder of Naboth, whose vineyard was coveted by Ahab.

The end of Jezebel is one of the most tragic recorded in the Bible. She was thrown from a window by order of Jehu, and was devoured by dogs, as had been prophesied by Elijah.

Jingoes

A "jingo" is a person who believes that his own country is the greatest and the only invincible nation on earth, and wants it to be prepared to fight at any moment to prove its superiority. Naturally, the jingo favors a strongly aggressive policy toward other nations.

There are various accounts of the origin of the term "jingo," and the word was certainly used as far back as the eighteenth century, but perhaps in a different sense. However, it came into general use in England in the time of the Russo-Turkish war, in 1877-78. There was a party in England which hated the Russians, and wanted the British Government to intervene in favor of the Turks.

There was at that time a popular music hall song which contained the following lines:

"We don't want to fight; but, by jingo, if we do,
We've got the ships, we've got the men, and got the
money too."

(See also "Chauvinism".)

Job's Comforter

Anyone who has lived any considerable time in this "vale of tears" has known the ministrations of a "Job's comforter," one who pretends to sympathize with you in your grief, but who says that you

brought it on yourself ; thus in reality adding weight to your woe.

The reference is to the Biblical story told in the Book of Job, how his three friends came to mourn with him and to comfort him ; "they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him." Later, when one of them, Zophar, had reproved Job for justifying himself in the afflictions which the Lord had sent upon him, Job answered and said :

"No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you ; I am not inferior to you ; yea, who knoweth not such things as these?"

It was a reply that was quite typical of those that are often made to those who come to the afflicted as "Job's comforters."

Joe Miller

Probably the younger generation is not familiar with the term "Joe Miller," meaning an ancient, stale joke (sometimes called a "chestnut") but older readers know that the term has been in vogue for many years.

In the reign of King James II of England, who sat on the throne from 1685 to 1688, one John Mottley compiled a book of jests. He called his book "Joe Miller's Jests," giving it that name from a witty actor of farce during the time when the plays of Congreve were in vogue, in the latter part of the seventeenth century.

Probably Mottley's jests included many that were not new even in his time, more than two hundred years ago, and they have not improved with age. To this day an old, oft-repeated joke meets with the accusation of being a "Joe Miller."

John Bull

John Bull is the national nickname for an Englishman, represented (by his friends) as a bluff, kind-hearted but bull-headed farmer. The pictorial representation of John Bull in his tight trousers, neck stock, bell-crowned high hat, etc., is famous.

John Bull, as the archetype of an Englishman, is the creation of Dr. John Arbuthnot, well-known British physician and author (born 1667, died 1735). He wrote a satire on many nations, giving them nicknames. His book was called a "History of Europe." In it he referred to John Bull's family relations; for example, he called the Church of England "John Bull's Mother."

The Scotch were called by Dr. Arbuthnot (who was himself of Scottish descent) "John Bull's Sister Peg." She was, according to him, a poor girl raised on oatmeal and water and lodged in a garret exposed to the north winds.

Jolly Roger

An intensely partisan newspaper spoke of a leading politician of his state as "hoisting the 'Jolly Roger,' and declaring war against both old parties."

The "Lexicographer" in the "Literary Digest" declared that the exact origin of the name "Jolly Roger" as applied to the flag of piracy (the white skull and cross bones on a black background) will probably never be known. The word "roger," says this authority on odd terms and expressions, was synonymous in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with "rogue," both being derived from the older spelling "roge," and meant, as it does to-day, a vagabond, rascal, trickster, thief, etc., and was therefore synonymous with "pirate."

"The word 'rover,' which is sometimes used in

place of 'Roger' as the name of the pirates' flag, has the same root as the word 'robber,' and a similar meaning to 'roger,' except that it is applied more specifically to wandering rascals; various explanations are given of 'jolly,' and 'Jolly Roger,' once applied to a vessel, would certainly sooner or later be applied to the ensign," said the "Lexicographer."

Jonah

The word or name "Jonah," meaning a "hoodoo," a bringer or harbinger of "hard luck," has become embedded in the English language.

The Book of Jonah is one of the minor books of the Old Testament. It tells how Jonah was sent by the Lord to cry against the city of Nineveh for its great wickedness. Disobeying, he fled to Joppa, to take ship for Tarshish. When a great storm arose that threatened to engulf the ship, the sailors learned from Jonah that he had "fled from the presence of the Lord," and so, being afraid, they cast him overboard, whereupon "the sea ceased from her raging."

But Jonah was swallowed by "a great fish," generally held a whale, in whose belly he remained three days and three nights. Being cast up by the "great fish" and repentant, Jonah proceeded with the errand on which he had been sent. (See also "Prophet's Gourd.")

Jonathan, Brother; see *Brother Jonathan*.

Jones, Davy; see *Davy Jones*.

Jot, Don't Care a ; see *Don't Care a Jot*.

Juan, Don; see *Don Juan*.

Judas-colored Hair

Although there is nothing in written record to justify the belief, it has long been popularly held that Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Christ, had red hair and a red beard. Possibly, some authorities hold, the belief originated in England in the aver-

sion which the Anglo-Saxons of olden days felt to the invading Danes, many of whom had red hair. So it was perhaps natural for the English of the older blood to attribute red hair to Judas, and also to the murderer Cain.

The old dramatists and poets have frequent allusions to "Judas-colored" hair. Shakespeare, in "As You Like It," makes Rosalind say, "His hair is of the dissembling color"; to which Celia replies: "Something browner than Judas's."

The most celebrated reference in literature to "Judas-colored hair" is that of the poet Dryden, who refers to the publisher Tonson as having "leering looks, bull-faced and freckled fair, with two left legs, with Judas-colored hair."

Jumbo, Mumbo; see *Mumbo Jumbo*.

Juno, Stately as; see *Juno*.

Ketch, Jack; see *Jack Ketch*.

Kicking the Bucket

As in the case of many other figurative expressions, there are two or more explanations of the familiar phrase, "to kick the bucket." It means, as probably everyone knows, to die.

One explanation says that when a man "kicks the bucket" he stands on a bucket to hang himself. Having adjusted the noose about his neck, he "kicks the bucket," and the trick is done. The other explanation is not quite so simple. In some parts of England a pulley is called a "bucket," and in Norfolk-shire a beam is known by the same name. When pigs are killed, they are hung by their hind legs on a bucket or beam, with their heads downward, and when oxen are slaughtered they are hauled up by a pulley. To "kick the bucket," therefore, means to be hung on the balk or bucket by the heels.

"To kick over the traces" means to show a spirit

of rebellion, and to "kick the beam" means to be of light weight, or of little consequence.

Kilkenny Cats

These famous felines, the Kilkenny cats, have become immortalized in literature as symbols of two opposing forces, nations, statesmen, individuals, etc., who fight against each other until both are destroyed.

The story goes that during a rebellion in Ireland, Kilkenny was garrisoned by a troop of Hessian soldiers, who amused themselves in barracks by tying two cats together by their tails and throwing them across a clothesline to fight. The officers, hearing of this, resolved to put a stop to the practice. The lookout man, enjoying the sport, did not observe the officer on duty approaching the barracks; but one of the troopers, more quicksighted, seizing a sword, cut off the two tails, and the cats made their escape. When the officer inquired the meaning of the two bleeding tails, he was coolly told that two cats had been fighting and had devoured each other all but the tails.

Killed by Kindness

We say of a person who is "killed by kindness" that he is overwhelmed with too much attention. For example, everyone has heard of cases of persons invited to spend holidays with others and not permitted to have any time for themselves. They are almost literally "killed with kindness."

There is a historic instance of a person who met with such a fate. It is said that Draco, the famous Athenian legislator in the seventh century before Christ, met with his death in this way. He was so popular that when he appeared in the theater of Ægina the spectators, to show their approval, show-

ered him with their caps and cloaks, and smothered him to death.

It seems hardly likely that this story should be well founded, since Draco is known in history chiefly for the severity of the laws which he initiated and promulgated.

King Pin

"King pin" means principal or chief, and we may speak of a person or thing as being the "king pin" in an undertaking or a group; as in the following quotation from a newspaper article: "This corporation comes pretty near to being the king pin of radio achievement in this country."

There are two explanations of the use of the expression "king pin." One says that it comes from the name "king pin" being given to the wooden pin that is set at the top of the triangle in bowling. In some bowling games a tall pin is set up in the center of the frame, and this is the "king pin." The other explanation connects "king pin" with the "king bolt," a vertical bolt or fastening by which the front axle and wheels of a vehicle are connected with the rest of the structure. Naturally, the "king bolt" or "king pin" is a very important part, since it serves to hold all together. If it is knocked out, the whole affair falls apart. Hence we get the figurative use of the term "king pin" as meaning principal or chief.

Kingdom, Celestial; see *Celestial Kingdom*.

King's English

"King's English" is pure or correct speech, such as the King is believed to use. For the greater part of the nineteenth century, during the long reign of Queen Victoria, the phrase was not "king's English," but "queen's English."

Perhaps it is not necessary to say that there have

been kings and queens of England who did not use correctly the speech of the land over which they reigned. The early Georges, for example, hardly spoke English at all. A person who uses the language incorrectly is said sometimes to "butcher" or "murder" the king's English.

The phrase, "king's English" is very old. Shakespeare uses it. In "The Merry Wives of Windsor," act I, scene 4, he makes Mrs. Quickly say, referring to Doctor Caius: "Here will be an old abusing of God's patience, and the king's English."

Kismet

"To each man an appointed hour. We die as destiny wills; the Fates decide when and where the thread shall be cut. Kismet!" wrote Herbert Kaufman.

Kismet (Arabic "kismeh" and Persia "kusmut"), meaning "fate," is a word used by Mohammed when he preached, in the Koran, the duty of submission to all that God had preordained. He believed that a man's every action was predestined, yet never suggested the folly of struggling against an adverse doom. The doctrine of "Kismet," says one writer, "has prompted Mohammedans to the utmost heroism and fortitude in the cause of their religion."

Of course, the Mohammedans are not alone in their belief in Fate or Kismet. Even Shakespeare wrote, "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will."

Kite, Gilderoy's; see *Gilderoy's Kite*.

Knees of the Gods

When a human undertaking is considered to be in the hands of fate or destiny, and therefore beyond human control or influence, it is said sometimes to be "on the knees of the gods." Writing of the

expedition aiming at the conquest of Mount Everest, the leader said: "The organization is complete and the climbers are fit. The rest is on the knees of the gods." That is, he had done all he could to make the expedition a success. Let the gods, on whose knees rest success or failure, see to the outcome.

The ideas entertained by the Greeks and the Romans respecting the nature of divinity were exceedingly imperfect. A being possessing powers of body and mind superior to those of man (especially superior might) mainly answered to their notions of a god. The superiority which they ascribed to their deities consisted chiefly in freedom from bodily decay, a sort of immortal youth, ability to move with wonderful celerity and to appear and disappear at pleasure. They had noble and beautiful forms, and exerted immediate influence upon the condition of mortals. But even the gods were subject to fate or destiny.

Knights, Carpet; see *Carpet Knights*.

Knights Errant

Speaking of some Americans who took it upon themselves to voice in Europe the opinions of the American people, an editorial writer said, "Let our knight errants of diplomacy speak their minds with entire liberty, but let them not fail to make it plain that they are not speaking the mind of the American people."

The knights errant in the ancient tales of chivalry were those knights who roamed about seeking damsels in distress to succor, wrongs to right, imprisoned kings to set free, and other adventures of the sort. In France, from 768 to 987, the land was encumbered with fortified castles; in England this was not the case until the reign of Stephen, from 1135

to 1154. The lords of these castles used to carry off women and commit other crimes, so that a class of men sprang up (at least, in the pages of romance), who roamed about in full armor, to protect the defenceless and aid the oppressed. Cervantes pictured them in "Don Quixote" and Mark Twain in his own way in "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court."

Knights of the Round Table, see *Round Table*.
Knot, Gordian; see *Gordian Knot*.

Know Nothings

Writers of editorials on political topics are fond, sometimes, of "ringing in" references to the old "Know Nothing" party, which arose in the United States in 1853. It had as its cardinal principle a strong opposition to those who were foreign-born, and it proposed to keep them out of office and to make them wait longer than the native-born before they became citizens. The party had its greatest vogue from 1853 to 1856, and it had virtually disappeared by 1860.

The members of the "Know Nothings" called themselves the "American Party," and their nickname was conferred upon them by outsiders because, being a secret organization, they replied to all questions concerning it by saying, "I don't know."

In the year 1888 there was another political party which assumed the name of the old "American Party," and which nominated General Curtis for the Presidency.

Knowing the Ropes

There are two explanations of the commonly used phrase, "to know the ropes," which means to be wise, to be well acquainted with the details of a business, the tricks of a trade, and so forth.

The first explanation tells us that a man who

"knows the ropes" is as well informed concerning the matter at hand as a sailor is concerning the ropes of his vessel.

The other explanation says that "ropes" means tricks, or artifices, and that "knowing the ropes" is a horseracing term. To rope a horse is to pull it in or restrain it from showing its best speed, to prevent it from winning a race. In England, when a boxer or other athlete loses purposely, he is accused of "roping."

Labors of Hercules; see *Hercules' Labors*.

Lady, Old, of Threadneedle Street; see *Old Lady of Threadneedle Street*.

Lady Godiva's Ride, see *Peeping Tom*.

Lame Ducks

There are two explanations of the term "lame duck." One of them is American, the other is English.

In America a "lame duck" is a politician who has failed of re-election, though his party has been retained in office or returned to power in the election. It then becomes the duty of the incoming administration to take care of the "lame ducks," according to some theories of the proper use of public office, and such disappointed statesmen are consoled for the loss of elective office by appointment to offices which do not require election.

In England a "lame duck" is, in Stock Exchange slang, a member of the exchange who waddles off on settlement day without settling his account.

Lamp, to Smell of; see *Smell of the Lamp*.

Land of Beulah, see *Beulah Land*.

Lantern of Diogenes

The lantern of Diogenes was used by the famous Greek philosopher, who lived in the fourth century before Christ. The story goes that he walked about the streets of Corinth, his home city, in broad day-

light, carrying a lighted lantern. They asked him why he needed the lantern when the sun was shining. "I am looking for an honest man," said Diogenes.

He belonged to a sect of philosophers known as "Cynics," which means dogs. The name is said to have been bestowed on them because of the severity and sourness of their doctrines, which insisted on the most rigid self-denial. Many stories are told of the doings and sayings of Diogenes. Having heard Plato define a man as "a two-legged animal without feathers," he stripped a fowl of its feathers, and, taking it into the Academy, exclaimed, "See Plato's man!"

Large, *By* and; see *By and Large*.

Last, Sticking to; see *Stick to Your Last*.

Last Ditch

"He is a 'last ditch' warrior; whoever will may give in, but he will keep his flag flying to the last, though he be deserted by all his followers." Thus wrote a newspaper of a public man who stuck to his opinions through thick and thin.

"To die in the last ditch" means to resist to the utmost and go down fighting. Hume's "History of England" says that the saying may be ascribed to William of Orange, the famous statesman of the Netherlands. When the Duke of Buckingham spoke of the inevitable ruin which hung over the United Provinces, and asked him whether he did not see that the commonwealth was lost, he replied, "There is one certain means by which I can be sure never to see my country's ruin—I will die in the last ditch."

In a country so intersected by water courses as the Netherlands, this would surely mean resisting to the last extremity.

Laughter, Homeric; see *Homeric Laughter*.

Laws, Blue; see *Blue Laws*.

Laying Pipes

"Pipe laying" means, simply, making secret political arrangements, whereby, for instance, a political "boss" of one party may insure his continuance in power by dickering with a "boss" of the opposing party. It is recorded that the phrase arose many years ago when the Whigs of New York City were accused of a gigantic scheme to bring on voters from Philadelphia. In the letters of arrangement that were written the form of a mere business correspondence was adopted, the number of men hired to visit New York and vote there illegally being spoken of as so many yards of pipe. The work of laying down pipe for the introduction of Croton water into New York City was at that time in full activity.

"The Whig leaders," says one writer, "were indicted on the strength of these so-called revelations, and the letters were read in court; but the jury believed neither in them nor in the writer of them, and the accused were acquitted. The term 'pipe laying,' however, was at once adopted as a synonym for negotiations to procure fraudulent votes."

Leave, French; see *French Leave*.
Lectures, Curtain; see *Curtain Lectures*.
Left, Over the; see *Over the Left*.

Legion

The expression "Legion," meaning a multitude, a great number, is heard most frequently in the phrase, "Their name is legion." The expression is old, and is found in the Bible, in the story of the man of the Gadarenes (St. Mark, chapter v) who was possessed of devils that were driven into the swine. In the ninth verse we read, "And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered saying, My name is Legion; for we are many."

"It is a proverbial expression somewhat similar to 'hydra-headed,'" says one authority on words and

phrases. "Thus, speaking of the homeless poor we should say, 'Their name is Legion'; so also we should say of the diseases arising from want of cleanliness, the evils of ignorance, and so on."

The famous Roman legion was a body of soldiers forming the principal unit of the army and varying from 3,000 to 6,000 men.

Leprechaun

The "leprechaun" (pronounced "lep-re-kon") is one of the best known figures in Irish folklore, and is met frequently in the poetical writings of the sons and daughters of Erin. He is a fairy figure, a sprite or gnome, and is represented often as a wrinkled old man.

Some writers feign that he is the shoemaker to the fairies, and tell us that his name is derived from two Erse words, "leith," meaning "one," and "brog" meaning "shoe," because he is always seen working at one shoe only. William Butler Yeats, in his *Fairy and Folk Tales*, writes:

"Do you not catch the tiny clamor,
 Busy click of an elfin hammer,
 Voice of the Lepracaun singing shrill,
 As he merrily plies his trade?"

As in all such cases, many legends have grown up about the result of seeing the leprechaun at his work, and his influence on the lives of those who meet him.

Lethe

"Unless these bills are to meet a lethal death, it looks as though the Governor and his supporters would soon have to employ the most stringent resuscitation measures known to the science of statecraft," says a recent editorial.

The word "lethal" is derived from the name of

the river Lethe, which was, in ancient Greek mythology, one of the rivers of the lower world. Its waters, when drunk by the dead, brought forgetfulness to them. The belief first appears in the fifth century before Christ, when the dramatist Aristophanes mentions it in his famous play, "The Frogs." Plato refers to the myth in his "Republic," and there are many other references to it in ancient and modern literature.

According to some versions of the tale, the souls of all the dead are obliged to taste the waters of Lethe, that they may forget everything said and done on earth.

Levantiug

In Galsworthy's novel, "The White Monkey," is found the following:

"Now that Elderson's levanted," he said, "the whole thing must come out."

There are two sources given of the term "levanted." It means "cleared out," "decamped," "run away." In the first place, some authorities say it comes from the Spanish verb "levantar," meaning to break up, as in the phrase "levantar el campo," to break camp. The other explanation is more picturesque. It attributes the English verb "levant" to the name "Levant," which is given to the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea and the neighboring countries. It was formerly the custom in England when a person was in pecuniary difficulties to give it out that he had "gone to the Levant." Hence, when a man lost a bet and could not or would not pay, he was said to have "levanted."

Leviathan

What is a "leviathan?" Nobody really knows. The word has become familiar in recent years as

the name given to a very large ship which carried American troops during the World War. It is pronounced with the accent on the second syllable, "vi," with the "i" long.

"Leviathan" is a Biblical word occurring several times in the Old Testament, and meaning a sea monster. By some commentators it is taken to indicate the crocodile, while others believe it indicates the whale or the dragon. The forty-first chapter of the Book of Job begins: "Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down?"

The term "leviathan" is applied frequently to something that is huge and formidable, or monstrous. One of the nicknames applied to Dr. Samuel Johnson, the celebrated writer of the eighteenth century, was "the Leviathan of Literature."

Lily, Painting the; see *Painting the Lily*.

Limelight

When public attention is focussed upon a person, he is said to be "in the limelight." One writer speaks of "politicians who are never happy save when they are in the limelight."

The term is borrowed from the stage. To bring out conspicuously the actor with the "star" part, or to call attention to a particular bit of "business," the limelight, an intensely bright light, is brought into use. Limelight has been used in the theater, in signalling apparatus and in optical or magic lanterns, but in recent years the greater convenience of the electric arc, where current is available, has tended to the replacement of the oxyhydrogen flame by electricity.

As the limelight is displaced more and more by electricity, of course the term "in the limelight" tends more and more to lose its literalness and to

take on more and more the character of a real "figure of speech."

Link, Missing; see *Missing Link*.

Lion, Bearding; see *Bearding the Lion*.

Lion, Nemean; see *Hercules' Labors*.

Lion's Mouth

Placing one's head in the lion's mouth means running deliberately and recklessly into danger, especially when there is no need for such action. The meaning is, of course, obvious.

In olden Venice the term, "the lion's mouth," had another significance. It meant a place provided by the ruling powers of the city, wherein charges of treason against the state might be placed secretly. It was somewhat similar to our modern letterboxes.

The body which received these secret accusations was the famous "Council of Ten." This was a body which ruled Venice from 1310 until the overthrow of the government of the city by Bonaparte in 1797. At first there were only ten members of the council, but the number was soon enlarged to seventeen. The powers of the council were exercised arbitrarily and often with harshness and despotism, and it was greatly feared, especially when Venice was at the height of her glory. But one writer says that "the height of the prosperity of Venice was reached when the council were in power; and when their despotism passed away, with it departed the greatness of the city."

Lion's Provider

A "lion's provider" is one who does the real work, while another gets the credit and reaps the benefit.

He is, according to one authority, a jackal; a foil to another man's wit; a humble friend who plays into your hand to show you to best advantage. The

jackal feeds on the lion's leavings, and is supposed to serve the lion in much the same way as a dog serves a sportsman. The dog lifts up its foot to indicate that game is at hand, and the jackal yells to advise the lion that prey is close by.

A related figure of speech is, of course, the "lion's share," wherein the idea is expressed that the lordly lion, the king of beasts, must get his portion of the spoils before any share falls to any of the subordinate creatures.

Lion's Share

An editorial writer says, "A full vote is not always an advantage to a candidate if his opponent gets the lion's share of it."

The "lion's share" is, of course, all or nearly all. We get the expression from the fables of Æsop, in which it is related that the lion, the fox and the ass once went hunting together, and were very successful. The lion, on their return, asked the ass to divide the spoil and allot to each of the three partners his proper share.

The ass divided it into three equal parts, and modestly asked the others to take their choice. Thereupon the lion, roaring in anger, fell upon the ass and killed him. Then he asked the fox to make a proper division. This the fox, with his natural cunning, did by keeping for himself the smallest possible share. When the lion asked him how he had learned his arithmetic so well, the fox replied: "By noting what happened to the ass."

Little Endians; see *Big Endians*.

Lodestar

A lodestar is something that leads us or guides us. For example, in Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream," Act I, Scene 1, Helena says to

Hermia, "Your eyes are lodestars." The lodestar is the "leading star" by which sailors are guided, Polaris, or the pole star. It is the star that is known to astronomers as Alpha in the constellation Ursa Minor, and to the layman as the North Star, because it points the way to the North. The constellation is known also as the Cynosure, whence we get the expression, "cynosure," to indicate something that is the center of attraction.

The lodestar or North Star is the star in the northern hemisphere toward which the axis of the earth very nearly points, and for that reason it appears to be stationary in the heavens. It is easily found by means of the stars called the "pointers," and many persons who are unversed in the lore of the starry heavens are still able to point out the North Star.

Log Rolling

"You help me and I'll help you" is perhaps as good a definition of "log rolling" as can be given. The term is used more frequently in referring to political matters than in any other connection, but it is not uncommonly used in reference to other affairs. For instance, when a literary critic displays a preference for the works of a man for whom he has, or is suspected of having, a personal liking—regardless of the merit of the books—he is said to "roll logs" for his friend.

"Log rolling" is a term of frequent occurrence in American politics, whereby is signified an arrangement, made between legislators having diverse interests at stake, to vote for the measures of each, thereby securing their passage. "Though the term, as commonly used, is one of reproach, there is nothing intrinsically wrong about 'log rolling,'

provided the object is a worthy one," says one writer.

Long Chalk; see *Not by a Long Chalk*.
Lothario, Gay; see *Gay Lothario*.

Lotus Eaters

Lotus eaters are people who lose themselves in dreams, forgetting the realities of life.

The legend concerning them is of Homeric origin. It tells of people who ate of the fruit of the lotus tree, the effect of which was to make them forget their friends and home, and to lose all desire of returning to their native land, their only wish being to live in idleness in the land of the lotus. The legend is related in the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*.

Tennyson wrote a poem which he called "The Lotus Eaters." In it he says: "Dark faces pale against that rosy flame, the mild-eyed melancholy lotus eaters came."

Lucifer, Proud as; see *Proud as Lucifer*.
Luck, Pot; see *Pot Luck*.
Luxury, Byzantine; see *Byzantine Luxury*.

Lynch Law

Everybody knows, of course, what is meant by "lynch law," or "lynching," since the administration of so-called justice by self-constituted judges, juries and executioners has become deplorably common.

There are various accounts of the origin of the term. One, which is perhaps as well founded as any, is to the effect that the name "lynch law" was derived from the name of a native of Campbell County, Virginia, a certain old Colonel Lynch. He was in the habit of administering summary punishment, according to his own idea of justice, to marauders and miscreants of every description. Of

course, he paid little or no attention to the forms prescribed by law.

Hence he was called "Judge" Lynch, and this is said to be the true origin of the terms "lynching" and "lynch law."

Mab., Queen; see *Queen Mab*.

Macedonian Cry

A "cry from Macedonia," or "Macedonian cry" is an earnest appeal for help or guidance, especially one that comes from a far distance. The reference is Biblical; it is taken from the sixteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, verses 9 and 10, wherein it is written:

"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

"And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them."

Macedonia, an ancient country north of Greece, later a part of the Turkish Empire, was for a short time, under Alexander the Great, the dominant power of the world.

Machiavellian

Unlike most of the other figures of speech or literary allusions which one encounters in reading, the term "Machiavellian" comes from the name of a real person. He was Niccolo di Bernardo Machiavelli, who was born in 1469 and died in 1527. He was a statesman and writer of Florence, Italy.

"Machiavellian" means exceedingly crafty and also unscrupulous. It is derived from the principles upheld in "The Prince," a book written by

Machiavelli, in which he declares that any means, however lawless or unscrupulous, may be employed by a ruler in maintaining his power. "It is necessary for a prince wishing to hold his own to know how to do wrong," says Machiavelli. The book contains many other cynicisms such as "He who believes that new benefits will cause great personages to forget old injuries is deceived."

Machine, God From; see *God From the Machine*.

Mad as a Hatter

So far as common observation goes, hatters are just as sane as men of any other class, and just as much, or as little, prone to "flying off the handle" as other men. Yet we have the queer expression, "mad as a hatter."

Apology to the hatters is found in the explanation that when we say "mad as a hatter" we really say, "mad as an adder." In the Anglo-Saxon the word "mad" was used as a synonym for violent, furious, angry or venomous. In some parts of England, and in the United States particularly, it is used in this sense. "Atter" was the Anglo-Saxon word for an adder or viper. The proverbial saying has therefore no reference to hatmakers, but merely means "as venomous as an adder." The Germans call an adder "natter."

Mad as a March Hare

In March, in the mating season, hares are unusually shy and wild, whence we get the phrase, "mad as a March hare," to denote erratic or unaccountable action.

There is, however, another version of the origin of the phrase. It is said to be "mad as a marsh hare." The famous writer Erasmus of the sixteenth century uses the phrase in this form and

says, "Hares are wilder in marshes from the absence of hedges and cover."

Shakespeare, in "Henry IV," used the phrase, "melancholy as a hare." According to medieval belief, the eating of the flesh of the hare was believed to generate melancholy. Shakespeare also has, in "Henry VI," "hare-brained" or "hair-brained," meaning "mad as a March hare, giddy, foolhardy."

Magic Carpet

Everyone has wished, at times, for a "magic carpet"—one that would whisk him instantaneously, without effort, to the place where he longed to be. Mohammedan writers say that King Solomon had a green silk carpet, on which his throne was placed when he traveled. This carpet was large enough for all his forces to stand upon; the men and women stood on his right hand, the spirits on his left. When all were arranged in order, Solomon told the wind where he wished to go, and the carpet, with all its contents, rose in the air and alighted at the place indicated. In order to screen the party from the sun, the birds of the air with outspread wings formed a canopy over the whole party.

There is a similar story in the "Arabian Nights," in which the magic carpet is called "the magic carpet of Tangy," or "Prince Houssain's carpet."

Magog and Gog; see *Gog and Magog*.

Mahatma

"'Mahatma' is a well-known Sanskrit word applied to men who have retired from the world, who by means of a long ascetic discipline have subdued the passions of the flesh and gained a reputation for sanctity and knowledge. "That these men are able to perform most startling feats, and

to suffer the most terrible tortures, is perfectly true," wrote Professor Max Muller, one of the greatest of modern authorities on the religions of the Orient, philology, etc.

Other authorities tell us that mahatmas are initiates who have proved their courage and purity by passing through sundry tests and trials. It is a Hindu word applied to certain Buddhists. The mahatmas are also called "masters." According to the Theosophists, man has a physical, an intellectual and a spiritual nature, and a mahatma is a person who has reached perfection in each of these three natures. As his knowledge is perfect, he can produce effects which appear miraculous to the less learned.

Malaprop, Mrs.; see *Mrs. Malaprop*.

Man in the Moon

"Man in the moon" is a name popularly given to the dark lines and spots upon the surface of the moon which are visible to the naked eye and which, when examined with a telescope, are discovered to be due to depressions and mountains on the surface. It is one of the most popular and perhaps one of the most ancient of superstitions that these lines and spots are the figure of a man leaning on a fork, on which he carries a bundle of thorns and brushwood. For stealing these, on a Sunday, he was confined in the moon.

Some of those versed in such matters explain that this story undoubtedly had its origin in the account given in the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Numbers, thirty-second verse, of a man who was stoned to death for gathering sticks upon the Sabbath day. With the Italians Cain appears to have been the offender, and the Jews have a Talmudical story to the effect that Jacob is in the moon, and that his face is visible.

Mandrake

"Almost as soothing as a draught of the mandrake which brings forgetfulness," says a recent writer. From very ancient times the root of the herb mandrake or mandragora has been credited with miraculous powers, such as inducing forgetfulness. The plant is mentioned in the Bible.

The root of the mandrake divides itself into two parts which sometimes present the rude figure of a man. In ancient times human figures were often cut out of the root, and wonderful virtues were ascribed to them. One of the superstitions connected with the plant is that when the mandrake is uprooted it utters a scream, in explanation of which Thomas Newton, in his "Herball to the Bible," says: "It is supposed to be a creature having life, engendered under the earth of the seed of some dead person put to death for murder."

Manor Born

"If a recent canvass of a women's college showed nearly 50 per cent of the girls to the manor born smoking, this is not surprising in the women's workhouse," says a recent official report.

The phrase, "to the manor born," has given rise to much discussion by literary folk. Many aver that it should be "to the manner born." This view is supported by Webster's New International Dictionary, which says:

"To the manner born, born to follow or obey a certain practice or custom; also, having lifelong acquaintance with given conditions, customs, etc.; apparently naturally fitted for some occupation, work, or position. The phrase as used by Shakespeare in "Hamlet" (Act I, scene 4) has by some been wrongly understood to refer to a 'manor,' of

which 'manner' is an old variant spelling, and hence the phrase 'to the manor born' is sometimes used in the sense, accustomed to the usages of a locality, or of high or polite society."

March Hare, Mad as a; see *Mad as a March Hare*.
Mare, Gray; see *Gray Mare*.

Mare's Nest

A mare's nest is, according to Webster's New International Dictionary, "something that appears to be wonderful on being found, but that turns out to be imaginary or a hoax; something grossly absurd that is credulously believed to be genuine or true."

Another authority declares that to find a mare's nest is to make what you suppose to be a great discovery, but which turns out to be all moonshine. The use of the expression is very old. It is found in the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, contemporaries of Shakespeare, and in other writings of the time. The phrase is in common use to-day, especially in editorial writings. An English newspaper said, "Are we to believe that the Governor, executive council, the officers and merchants have been finding mare's nests only?"

The French have a saying, "to find the nest of a mouse in the ear of a cat."

Marines, Telling it to; see *Telling It to the Marines*.

Mark, Save the; see *Save the Mark*.

Marriages, Fleet; see *Fleet Marriages*.

Mayfair

The name "Mayfair" has become a synonym for the fashionable section of a city, and current literature contains many references to it. Michael Arlen, for example, is said to be an adept in depicting the life of Mayfair. In his case it is the Mayfair of London that is described.

Mayfair is a fashionable quarter of the west of

London; it is situated north of Picadilly and the Green Park. The district is so called because a pleasure fair was formerly held in that neighborhood. It was formerly, of course, an open space, and not the built-up section of the city that it is now. In the "Gentleman's Magazine" of April, 1816, a Mr. Sharp gave an interesting account of the fair as he remembered it fifty years before. Duck hunting, prize-fighting, donkey racing, bull baiting and other popular amusements formed the recreations of the populace in a district that is now the center of fashionable and wealthy life in the English metropolis.

Mazeppa

Making fun of President Coolidge's electric hobby-horse, on which the President obtained exercise, according to newspaper report, one writer spoke of Mr. Coolidge being lashed, "Mazeppa-like" to the back of the horse.

Jan Mazeppa was a hetman of the Cossacks, who lived from 1640 to 1709. He is the hero of one of Byron's poems. Born of a noble Polish family, he became a page in the court of Jan Casimir, King of Poland. Here he intrigued with Theresia, the young wife of a count. The latter had the page lashed to the back of a wild horse, and turned adrift. The horse dropped dead in the Ukraine, and Mazeppa was released by a Cossack family, who nursed him in their own hut. He became secretary to the hetman of the Cossacks, and at the death of the leader was appointed his successor. Peter of Russia admired him and created him Prince of the Ukraine, but in the Russian wars with Sweden, Mazeppa deserted to Charles XII and fought against Russia at the battle of Pultowa. After the loss of this battle he fled. Some say that he was put to

death by the Czar for his treason, others that he died a natural death.

Medusa, Head of; see *Head of Medusa*.

Melancholy Jaques

The "melancholy Jaques" is one of the very large number of figures of speech which we owe to Shakespeare. The character to whom the name is applied is found in the play, "As You Like It." He is one of the attendants on the banished duke, and lives with him in the Forest of Arden, finding much to bewail in the state of the world and of his own fortunes. Hence, a man who is "sour on the world" is called frequently, a "melancholy Jaques."

The melancholy Jaques is called "a philosophic idler, cynical, sullen and contemplative." Shakespeare says he can "suck melancholy out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs." He is introduced by Shakespeare mainly to show the author's skill in character drawing, as he is of little consequence to the plot of the play. Some of Jaques' sayings are quoted frequently, especially his famous speech on "the seven ages of man," beginning, "All the world's a stage," in the first scene of the second act.

There is some difference of opinion over the proper pronunciation of "Jaques." Some say it should be "Jake-weez," others say "Jack-wees," while still others declare themselves in favor of "Zhak," in the French manner.

Men in Buckram

The expression, "men in buckram" is applied to imaginary forces. An editorial writer said not long ago, in deriding the strength of political opponents: "He and his associates have now a pretty clear notion of the actual numerical strength of the opposition 'men in buckram.'"

We get the phrase from Shakespeare. In "Henry IV, Part I," Falstaff tells Prince Henry how he fought against "the men in buckram." First there were but two, but as Falstaff spreads his tale, they grow from two to eleven. Prince Henry tells him, "We two saw you four set on four; you bound them, and were masters of their wealth. Mark you, how plain a tale shall put you down. Then did we two set on you four, and with a word, outfaced you from your prize."

The word "buckram," when used as an adjective, means "stiff, precise." An English writer speaks of "buckram dames."

Men of Straw

"Straw men," or "men of straw" are dummy figures, set up for the purpose of being knocked down, or demolished. For example, an author makes an elaborate argument which seems to uphold a point of view to which he is opposed. Then he sets out to prove how unfounded it is; he is said to set up a "man of straw." The point is well made in a recent book review, in which we find:

"There is an air in this part of his book of a dog chewing a well worn bone very assiduously; at points he seems almost to be raising straw men. He represents certain methods as having been used very ambitiously, and then destroys them. He not only destroys them, he stamps on them. The matter could have been handled with a little less serious thundering."

According to some writers, a "man of straw" is a man without means, a sham.

Mending Fences

When a Congressman or other public official leaves the scene of his duties and devotes his time to ad-

vancing his own political fortunes instead of the public interests, he is said to be "mending his fences."

The "American Political Dictionary" says that "mending fences" is "a phrase sometimes used to signify that a politician is quietly laying plans and promoting his own interest. It originated as follows: Just before the Republican national convention of 1880, one of the most prominent candidates for the Republican nomination, was visiting his farm at Mansfield, Ohio.

"One day while in a field with his brother-in-law, Colonel Moulton, engaged in replacing some rails of a fence, a reporter found him and sought some political news by inquiring what Sherman was doing. Colonel Moulton avoided the necessity of a direct reply by exclaiming, 'Why, you can see for yourself; he's mending his fences.'"

Merry Andrew

This title, "Merry Andrew," is given to a clown, one who amuses by "cutting up" in a ridiculous way. The dictionary defines a "Merry Andrew" as one whose business it is to make sport for others, but the term is applied also to a non-professional entertainer.

It is said that we get the name from that of Andrew Borde, who was a physician to Henry VIII of England. He was a man of great learning, but very eccentric, and in order to instruct the people he used to address them at fairs and other merrymakings in very homely manner, adapting his discourse to their simple understandings. Those who imitated his wit and drollery, although they lacked his learning, were called "Merry Andrews" after him.

This derivation of the term is questioned, however, and it is recorded that in the old plays An-

drew was a common name for a valet or manservant, as Abigail was for a lady's maid.

Mess of Pottage

Speaking of the suggested annexation of Canada to the United States, a writer of a letter to a New York paper asserted that "the Canadian people are not willing to sell their birthright for a mess of pottage."

The allusion is to the well known story in the Bible (in the twenty-fifth chapter of Genesis) wherein it is related how Esau, son of Isaac, sold to his younger twin brother Jacob his birthright for "bread and pottage of lentils," when the elder was faint from hunger.

"Mess" means, in this sense, according to Webster's New International Dictionary, "a prepared or a made dish or a portion of or kind of liquid, semi-liquid or soft food, or a sufficient quantity (of a specified kind of food) for a dish or meal"; and pottage is "a dish of vegetables, or vegetables and meat, boiled until tender and seasoned; soup, especially a thick soup." The word "pottage" is used now chiefly in literature.

Message to Garcia

"It is time that a new Elbert Hubbard arose to rouse the people of America with another 'Message to Garcia,'" says an editorial writer who argues that we have not the same sense of duty and responsibility that inspired our forefathers.

Probably older readers remember the "Message to Garcia," but it is not so well known to the younger generation. At the time of the Spanish American War, Elbert Hubbard, then in great vogue as a writer and philosopher, wrote an article, using as

his text the inability of many persons, when charged with a mission or an errand, to go about it without delay and quibbling and asking questions and making conditions. He cited the action of Major Andrew S. Rowan, of the United States Army, who was ordered to find the Cuban general Garcia, somewhere in Cuba, and deliver to him a message requesting his coöperation with the American troops. Rowan did not ask, "Where is Garcia?" or "How shall I find him?" He simply went, and carried the "message to Garcia."

Elbert Hubbard, who wrote "The Message to Garcia," was born in 1856 and was lost with the *Lusitania* in 1915.

Midas, Touch of; see *Touch of Midas*.
Miller, Joe; see *Joe Miller*.

Mills of God

The idea contained in the figure of speech which represents the ruling power of the universe as presiding over a great mill, in which the destinies of mankind are ground, is very ancient, and is found in many ages and in many literatures. It seems to have seized on the minds of man everywhere and at all times as possessing a singular power and appositeness.

Probably the most familiar expression of the thought is found in the lines which Longfellow translated from Friedrich von Logau, a German poet of the seventeenth century, as follows:

"The mills of God grind slowly, yet they
grind exceeding small;
Though with patience He stands waiting,
with exactness He grinds all."

One authority on words and phrases defines the expression, "The mills of God grind slowly," as

follows: "Vengeance may be delayed, but it will come when least expected."

Mint and Cummin; see *Anise and Cummin*.

Missing Link

In the days of discussion of the truth or falsity of the doctrine or theory of evolution, there was plenty of mention of the so-called "missing link"; that is, the missing link between the animal kingdom and man.

According to one definition and explanation of the term, Darwin believed that the higher animals are developed from the lower ones. The lowest form of animal life is protoplasm, which develops into amœbæ (cell life), and hence, successively, into synamœbæ, gastrula, hydra, medusa, worms, hematozoa, ascidians, fish, amphibians, birds and reptiles, monotremata, marsupials, placental mammals, lemuriidæ, monkeys, missing link, man.

It is contended by many evolutionists that they do not allege that man is descended from the monkey, as is the common idea of their belief, but that both man and monkey are descended from a common ancestor. This belief is opposed, of course, by those who hold to the tenet of the divine origin of man.

Mississippi Bubble

Any fantastic financial scheme which enlists the support of a large number of investors or speculators and then goes to smash is likely to be referred to as a "Mississippi Bubble."

In 1717 a Scotchman named John Law residing in Paris devised a scheme for colonization on the banks of the Mississippi River. Shares were issued, which rose rapidly in value, owing to the report that there were gold and silver mines in the region to be settled.

Law's company undertook the management of the royal mint of France and farmed the government's revenues. As a result the company not only controlled practically all the colonial trade of France, but also managed the currency and finance of the country. The shares of the company rose to an enormous value by the year 1719, and in the following year Law tried to fuse his company with the Banque Royale. People began to lose confidence in the Mississippi scheme, and a run was made on the bank, which stopped payment. Law fled from France on the bursting of the "Mississippi Bubble."

Mitten, Getting the; see *Getting the Mitten*.

Mole-Eyed

The adjective "mole-eyed," or the phrase "blind as a mole" means lacking in sight, either literally or figuratively. Thus, a political writer said of the leaders of a faction opposed to his own that they were "mole-eyed, having no conception of their duty higher than mere provincialism."

However, moles are not blind, but, as they work underground, their eyes are very small. There is a mole that is found in the south of Europe, the eyes of which are covered by membranes, and probably this is the animal to which Aristotle, the famous Greek philosopher, referred when he said, "The mole is blind."

Moles are small, fur-bearing animals found in the temperate parts of Europe, America and Asia. They live mainly on insects and earthworms, with a small proportion of vegetable food. The well known mole hills are formed as the animal excavates the galleries that lead to and from its nest, and on lawns and pastures they cause disfigurement and inconvenience.

Monkey's Allowance

"He gets 'a monkey's allowance'—more kicks than half-pence," is a very old saying, to describe a person who works hard but gets little or nothing for his labor. The reference is to the monkey which accompanies the organ grinder; the poor beast is allowed to pick up the money that is thrown to him, but he must carry it to his master, who often repays him with ill treatment. The French have a saying, "I will pay you in monkey's money"—that is, in goods, in personal work, in mumblings and grimaces.

The French had a law that when a monkey passed the Petit Pont, or little bridge, in Paris, if it was for sale it was to pay four deniers—about two-thirds of a penny—for toll, but if it belonged to a showman and was not for sale, it should go toll-free if it performed its tricks.

Monster, Green-Eyed; see *Green-Eyed Monster*.

Moon, Blue; see *Once in a Blue Moon*.

Moon, Man in; see *Man in the Moon*.

Moon Rakers

A person who is very foolish or stupid is sometimes called a "moon raker," the name being derived from an old story about some rustics in England who tried to rake the reflection of the moon from a pond, believing it to be a cheese.

The people of Wilts, an English county (Wiltshire) are sometimes called "moon rakers," but in their case the term is rather complimentary than otherwise. The story goes that in "the good old days," when smuggling was common on the south coast of England, the Wiltshire men were noted smugglers. One day, seeing the coast guard on the watch, they sank in the sea some smuggled whiskey. When they believed the coast to be clear, they used rakes to drag in their goods, and lo! the guard appeared again, and demanded to know what was

going on. Pointing to the reflection of the moon on the water, the "innocent" Wilts men replied, "We are trying to rake out that moon yonder."

Morgana, Fata; see *Fata Morgana*.

Morpheus

Probably every reader has encountered the phrase "in the arms of Morpheus," or something similar. This means, in simpler language, asleep.

In classic myth, Morpheus was represented as the son of Somnus, the god of sleep. Morpheus himself was the god of dreams. He was supposed to fabricate the dreams that visit sleepers. He was pictured as an old man with wings and holding a vial or horn from which issued a vapor which produced sleep. The name Morpheus is derived from a Greek word which means to shape or form, and the name was given to the god of dreams because of the shapes or forms which he calls up before the dreamer.

The word morphine, the name of a sleep producing drug, comes from Morpheus.

Mortmain; see *Dead Hand*.

Mother Carey's Chickens

"Mother Carey's Chickens" is a name given to the stormy petrel, a bird seen flying over the ocean in many parts of the world. The name "Mother Carey" is a sailor's corruption of the Latin *Mater Cara*, or "Dear Mother," and the French call these birds "*Oiseaux de Notre Dame*," which means "Birds of Our Lady." They are also called sometimes by the Latin name "*Aves Sanctæ Mariæ*," or "Birds of the Holy Mary."

According to sailors' superstitions, these birds are friends of the wayfarer, sent to warn him of an approaching storm. As in the case of the albatross, it is most unlucky to kill any of them. The legend

declares that each bird contains the soul of a dead sailor. The story of the superstition is fully related in the sea story, "Poor Jack," by Captain Marryat.

Mountain and Mouse

Everyone has met persons who have bragged that they would do great things—and when the results of their efforts came forth, they were ridiculously small. To such persons the old saying about the mountain and the mouse is sometimes applied. The saying came about in the following way, according to an ancient tale:

The Egyptian king Tachos was at war, and sent to the Lacædemonians for help. King Agesilaus went with a contingent of men, but he was not impressive in appearance, and when the Egyptians saw him they said: "The mountains labored, Jupiter stood aghast, and out came a mouse!"

But Agesilaus was a man of spirit, and replied: "You call me a mouse now, but I will soon show you I am a lion."

Mrs. Boffin

In an article dealing with Suzanne Lenglen and Helen Wills, leading women lawn tennis players of the world, a sporting writer called them "the Mrs. Boffins of tennis."

Mrs. Boffin is a character in Dickens' novel, "Our Mutual Friend." She is the daughter of a "cats' meat man," and the wife of Nicodemus Boffin, called "Noddy" and also "The Golden Dustman." He is confidential servant to old John Harmon, dustman and miser, and when Harmon dies the greater part of his fortune, £100,000, goes to Boffin. Later, however, a son of Harmon turns up and the Boffins give up the fortune to him.

Mrs. Boffin is a very cheerful soul—especially so

when her husband's windfall permits her to indulge in luxury. However, even when the fortune is relinquished, Mrs. Boffin retains her kindness and her affection for her husband. Probably the sporting writer, in calling the two tennis players "Mrs. Boffins," meant that they retained their cheerfulness in all circumstances.

Mrs. Grundy

"What will Mrs. Grundy say?" is a query heard frequently. All the world stands in awe and fear of Mrs. Grundy—and this as it should be, perhaps, for Mrs. Grundy means, simply, public opinion. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* says of her:

"Mrs. Grundy, the name of an imaginary English character, who typifies the disciplinary control of the conventional proprieties of society over conduct, the tyrannical pressure of the opinion of neighbors on the acts of others. The name appears in a play by Thomas Morton, 'Speed the Plough' (1798), in which one of the characters, Dame Ashfield, continually refers to what her neighbor, Mrs. Grundy, will say, as the criterion of respectability. Mrs. Grundy is not a character in the play, but is a kind of 'Mrs. Harris' to Dame Ashfield."

Mrs. Malaprop

Blundering in the use of words is the characteristic mark of a Mrs. Malaprop, and a "Malapropism" means the ridiculous or grotesque misuse of a word.

Mrs. Malaprop is a famous character in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's comedy, "The Rivals." She is a good-natured, pompous ignoramus who is perpetually blundering in the use of words and phrases. One of her pet similes is "As headstrong as an allegory on the banks of the Nile." In one scene of the play she says: "We will not anticipate the past;

so, mind you, young people, our retrospection will be all to the future."

Sheridan derived the name "Malaprop" from the French "*mal à propos*," meaning inappropriate. B. P. Shillaber, American humorist, created an American Mrs. Malaprop; he named her "Mrs. Partington."

Mugwump

A "mugwump" is an independent in politics, one who reserves for himself the right to "bolt" the platform or candidate of his party if he sees fit to do so.

This term arose in the Presidential campaign of 1884 as a designation of the independent Republicans who seceded from their party and supported Grover Cleveland, the Democratic candidate, chiefly owing to a strong feeling against James G. Blaine, the Republican nominee. The word "mugwump" was first used by a New York newspaper, and it was said to be an Indian term meaning a chief or person of importance. It came to be applied derisively to persons who exaggerated their own wisdom or importance, and was used in this sense to describe the independents; but they adopted the name themselves, ignoring the reproach it had been intended to convey. Another explanation of the words takes it from Virginia, where it was said to mean a bull frog in the intermediate stage between a tadpole and a full grown frog, when it is really neither the one thing nor the other.

Mumbo Jumbo

Not long ago, according to a newspaper report, a speaker at a labor convention denounced "communism and all its works, and the 'mumbo jumbo' of Leninism." By "mumbo jumbo" he meant ridicu-

lous rites or mummary, intended to deceive the ignorant.

"Mumbo Jumbo" is a bogie or bugbear in the Mandingo towns of Africa. As the Kaffirs have, or had formerly, many wives, it happened not infrequently that the house became quite uninhabitable, owing to their squabbles. In such case, either the husband or a friend dressed himself in disguise and at dusk approached the unruly house with a following, and made the most hideous noises imaginable.

When the women had been sufficiently scared by the din, "Mumbo" seized the chief offender, tied her to a tree, and whipped her with "Mumbo's" rod, to the derision of all present. "Mumbo" is therefore not an idol, as is imagined by some writers, but one disguised to punish unruly wives. There is a description of the practice in Mungo Park's "Travels in the Interior of Africa," a book formerly famous.

Munchhausen

The name of Baron Munchhausen has come down to us as that of the greatest liar of all the sons of man since Adam, with the possible exception of Ananias.

Munchhausen was a real soldier and traveler who lived between 1720 and 1797. He served in the Russian army against the Turks and on retiring to his estate he amused and astonished his friends by his extraordinary tales of adventures in the war. A man named Rudolph Erich Raspe collected these long-bow stories of the baron's, found others of equal strength, and published the lot in a book, in 1785. The volume was called "Baron Munchhausen's Narrative of His Marvelous Travels and Campaigns in Russia."

For a hundred years the name "Munchhausen"

has been a by-word in many countries for a teller of wildly improbable and impossible tales.

Music, Facing the; see *Facing the Music*.

Muttons, Sticking to; see *Stick to Your Muttons*.

Mutual Admiration Society

A "mutual admiration society" is a body of persons (without exact organization for that purpose, of course) who praise one another to the skies; for example, it may be a literary coterie, or set, who go about telling the world how good the works of their friends are. Of course, the phrase is generally used ironically.

It was coined by Oliver Wendell Holmes, in his famous book, "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table." In it he says:

"Do I belong to a Society of Mutual Admiration? I blush to say that I do not at this present moment. All generous companies of artists, authors, philanthropists, men of science are, or ought to be, societies of mutual admiration. A man of genius or any kind of superiority is not debarred from admiring the same quality in another, nor the other from returning his admiration. They may even associate together and continue to think highly of each other. And so of a dozen such men, if any one place is fortunate enough to hold so many."

My Eye; see *All My Eye*.

Nabob, Rich as a; see *Rich as a Nabob*.

Nail, Paying on the; see *Paying on the Nail*.

Namby Pamby

The expression, "namby pamby" is now well established in the English language, and is used frequently, and by thousands of persons who have no idea of its origin. Indeed, it would be hard to guess that we get "namby pamby," meaning spiritless, weak, sentimental, etc., from the proper name Am-

brose Phillips. Still, whether one would guess it or not that is whence "namby pamby" comes.

Ambrose Phillips, born 1671, died 1749, was an English poet—or, rather, maker of verses—whose work is now forgotten. He wrote some verses addressed to the children of Lord Carteret and they were so extremely simple in form that the critics laughed at them. Harry Carey, a play writer, called them "namby pamby." He got the "namby" from a baby way of pronouncing "Ambrose," and the "pamby" followed to make a rhyme. Macaulay says, "This sort of verse has been called 'namby pamby' after the name of its author."

Nemean Lion, Killing; see *Hercules' Labors*.

Nest, Mare's; see *Mare's Nest*.

New, Brand; see *Brand New*.

Nick, Old; see *Old Nick*.

Nine Days' Wonder

In these days of the rapid spread of news, there are many more "nine days' wonders" than there used to be. Sensations come and go quickly nowadays.

A "nine days' wonder" is something that excites universal comment for a short time and is then forgotten. There are various explanations of the phrase. By some it is thought to have originated in some reference to the nine days during which Lady Jane Grey was styled Queen of England, in the year 1553. Other authorities attribute the saying to the nine days after birth during which a puppy remains blind. In an old collection of proverbs, "Bohn's Handbook of Proverbs," there is a saying, "A wonder lasts nine days, and then the puppy's eyes are open."

The phrase was in common use in the time of Shakespeare, as is seen in a reference to it in his play, "Henry VI."

Nine Tailors Make a Man

The present implication of the old saying, "Nine tailors make a man," is that a tailor is so much more feeble than another man that it would take nine of him to make a man of average stature and strength. There is a tradition that an orphan lad, in 1742, applied to a fashionable London tailor for alms. There were in the establishment nine journeymen, each of whom contributed something to set the little orphan up with a fruit barrow. The little merchant in time became rich, and adopted for a motto, "Nine tailors made me a man," or, "Nine tailors make a man."

This tale is disputed; it is said that the true origin of the saying is as follows: At the death of a man the tolling bell is rung thrice three tolls; at the death of a woman it is rung only thrice two tolls. The tolls were called sometimes, "tellers," and the saying should be, "Nine tellers mark a man."

Nines, Dressed up to; see *Dressed Up to the Nines*.

No Great Shakes

Two workingmen were overheard discussing a fellow laborer. "He thinks he's pretty good, but he's no great shakes at this kind of work," said one critic.

"No great shakes" means "not much good," nothing extraordinary, when applied to persons, and about the same as "no such mighty bargain," when applied to things. There are two theories to account for the derivation of "no great shakes." One is that we get it from the word "shake," meaning a shingle for the roof of shanties, or stubble left after harvest as gleanings for the poor. The other theory says that we get "no great shakes" from an Arabic word "shakhs," meaning man, and therefore if we

call someone "no great shakes" we mean that he is not much of a man.

To do something "in a brace of shakes" means that you will do it at once; that is, as soon as you can shake the dice box twice.

No Man's Land

A "no man's land" is territory that is unclaimed, in which the writ of the king or the state does not run. The phrase is used sometimes figuratively, and is also applied on shipboard to a space amidships that cannot be regarded as belonging to either the port or the starboard watch; hence, by extension, the phrase is used of a station or a job that is not specifically assigned to any one.

In American history there have been two regions known as "No Man's Land." One was a strip of public land lying west of the old Indian Territory (now the State of Oklahoma). It was north of Texas, east of New Mexico and south of Kansas. It did not belong to, and was not subject to, any of these states or the territory, and was a refuge for evil-doers from them all. The second "No Man's Land" was a narrow strip of land in Chester County, Pennsylvania, between Maryland and Delaware. Years ago there was considerable dispute over this bit of land, and it led to confusion in the matters of jurisdiction, the paying of taxes, and the like.

In war times, territory lying between the lines of opposing armies and not under the control of either is frequently called "no man's land."

Nob and Hob; see *Hob Nob*.

Nose, Paying Through the; see *Paying Through the Nose*.

Nose Out of Joint

Anyone whose nose is put "out of joint" is supplanted in the affections or good graces of another,

by a rival. It means also to have one's plans thwarted, or to be humiliated. Perhaps the most common use of the expression is when a child loses his or her position of favorite in a household through the birth of a younger brother or sister. Then, indeed, is a little one's nose put "out of joint."

The expression seems to be peculiar to the English language. In French, a corresponding locution is "to cut the grass from under one's feet." It is of long standing in English; as long ago as 1614 an English author wrote:

"Fearing now lest this wench which is brought over hither should put your nose out the joint, coming between home and you."

Naturally, the nose figures in many colloquial expressions. For example: "To count noses," "to cut off one's nose to spite one's face," "to keep one's nose to the grindstone," "paying through the nose," "to snap one's nose off," "under your very nose."

Not by a Long Chalk

The common expression, "not by a long chalk," meaning "not by far, or not by a good deal," is believed to refer to the ancient custom of making tally marks by means of chalk, before the lead pencil became common.

Chalk figures rather frequently in the figurative use of English. For example, to know the difference between chalk and cheese means to be wise, to have the power of telling the real from the worthless, between the counterfeit and the genuine. The resemblance between chalk and cheese has something to do with the saying, and the alliteration has helped to popularize it. Another saying has it that "they are no more alike than chalk is like cheese"; that is, there may be a slight apparent resemblance, but there is no real likeness.

When a man is able to "walk a chalk line," he is sober; in the olden days, a sailor suspected of having imbibed too much was required to walk without wavering along a chalk line marked out on deck.

Not Worth a Doit

Anything that is "not worth a doit" has very little value, and if you say that you "do not care a doit" about something, you mean that you attach no importance to it. "I don't give a doit for his opinion of me," was heard recently.

A doit was originally a small Dutch coin worth about half a farthing—that is, about a quarter of a cent in American money—but the name has also been employed to describe various other coins of small account.

Akin to the expressions, "Not worth a doit," etc., are others such as "not worth a farthing," "not worth a fig," "not worth a tinker's dam," etc. In fact, it seems that the ingenuity of mankind has been exercised in many such ways to express the idea of something that is of very small value or importance. The same idea is found in many other languages besides English.

Not Worth a Fig

The phrases, "I don't care a fig for it," "not worth a fig," and the like, are derived, it is believed, not from the name of the fruit but from the old word "fico," meaning a snap of the fingers. Thus we say, "I don't care that for it," emphasizing the word "that" by a snap of the fingers.

In one of Shakespeare's plays he wrote, "a fig for Peter," but in another the wording runs, "the figo for thy friendship." Some authorities including Webster hold, however, that we get this use of the word "fig" from the name of the fruit, and when

we "don't care a fig" for something we mean that we don't care the value of a fig, which is small. In some parts of England a raisin is called a fig.

Not Worth a Rap

Probably everyone who speaks English has used the expression, "Not worth a rap," or "I don't give a rap for it," or something similar, without ever thinking of the meaning of the phrase.

In the early part of the eighteenth century, money, especially small coins, was very scarce in Ireland, and to meet the want of it a base halfpenny, called a "rap," was coined and issued. This was in the year 1721. The rap was worth about half a farthing. At one time there was in circulation in Switzerland a coin called a "rappe," of which it took seven to make a penny's worth. Dean Swift wrote, in his "Drapier's Letters," "Many counterfeits passed about under the name of 'raps.'"

Similar in meaning to "not worth a rap" is the well-known "not worth a fig"—and it might be said that anything that is "not worth a fig" is still lower in value than that which is not worth a rap, since a rap was really a very small coin, while a "fig" meant, probably, simply a snap of the fingers.

Not Worth a Rush

Anything that is "not worth a rush" is of very little value indeed, so when we apply the saying to a man it indicates that we hold him in very low esteem. The more modern form of the expression is "not worth a straw."

The older expression dates far back to the time when floors were strewn with rushes, before carpets were invented or put into common use. For distinguished guests clean, fresh rushes were used, while those of inferior rank had either the rushes

which had already been used by their superiors, or no rushes at all. They were, therefore, "not worth a rush."

Rushes are used nowadays not for floor covering, but for caning chairs and plaiting mats, and in some places the pith is used for wicks and rushlights.

Not Worth One's Salt

Anyone who is "not worth his salt" is of very little value; or, according to one definition of the term, not worth his pay, or wages.

In the olden days the Romans served out rations of salt and other necessities to their soldiers and civil servants. These rations were called by the general name of "salt" (in Latin, "sal") and when money was substituted for these rations, the stipend went by the name of "sal-arium," from which we derive the modern word "salary."

Naturally, since salt is a necessity of life, it has given rise in the course of the ages to many popular sayings, besides the one about "not worth one's salt." There is a very old English saying, "He won't earn salt for his porridge," meaning "he will never earn a penny." A man who is "true to his salt" is faithful to his employer.

Nymphs

An especially attractive young woman is sometimes called a "nymph"; thus, a well known female tennis player who combined skill in the game with good looks was called "a nymph of the courts."

The nymphs of ancient mythology were viewed as holding a sort of intermediate place between gods and men, as to the duration of life; these beautiful female creatures were not absolutely immortal, yet they lived a vast length of time. Oceanus was considered as their common father, although the descent

of various sorts of nymphs was given. Their usual place of residence was a grotto or water cave. There were various kinds of nymphs, such as the Oreades, or nymphs of the mountains; the Naiades, Nereides and Potamides, who inhabited the fountains, seas and rivers; the Dryades and Hamadryades, the nymphs of the woods; and others not so well known. In the city of Rome there was a building called the "Nymphæum," adorned with statues of the nymphs and abounding, it is said, with fountains and waterfalls. Festivals were held in honor of the nymphs, whose number has been stated as more than three thousand.

Oath, Ephebic; see *Ephebic Oath*.

Oath, Hippocratic; see *Hippocratic Oath*.

Oath of Godwin; see *Godwin's Oath*.

Oats, Wild; see *Wild Oats*.

Odor of Sanctity

To die "in the odor of sanctity" means to pass away in good standing with the church and one's fellow men. "The odor of sanctity," says Webster's New International Dictionary, "is a sweet or aromatic odor by some said to be emitted by the corpses of great saints, either before burial or at exhumation, and regarded as an evidence of their sanctity; hence, agreeable manifestation of holiness; reputation for sanctity."

There is a certain truth in the phrase, for when one honored by the Roman Catholic Church dies, it is not unusual to perfume the room with incense, and sometimes to embalm the body. It is an ancient custom; Homer tells us that Hector's body was washed with rosewater.

"In both the Greek and Western Church incense is used, and the aroma of these consecrated oils follows the believer from birth to death," says a magazine writer.

Ogres

Marat, said a recent commentator on the history of France, was one of the "champion ogres of the Revolution."

An ogre, says Webster's New International Dictionary, is "a monster or hideous giant of fairy tales and folklore, who lives on human beings; hence, any frightful giant; or hideous or cruel man."

The idea of the ogre is an Oriental invention, and the word is said to be derived from the Ogurs, a desperately savage horde of Asiatics who overran part of Europe in the fifth century. This is one explanation of the origin of the word; another says that it is derived from Orcus, an ugly, cruel, man-eating monster who is described by the Italian poets Bojardo and Ariosto. The female of the ogre is called an ogress, and the home of the monster is always referred to as a "den."

Oil on the Waters

To pour oil on the troubled waters, is, according to a very old figure of speech, to soothe a troubled spirit, or to bring peace in any other way. Oil, spreading over the face of the waters, actually serves to still them, we are told by good authorities. Commodore Wilkes, a famous commander of the old United States Navy, saw the effect of stilling the waters produced during a violent storm off the Cape of Good Hope, Africa, by oil that leaked from a whaling vessel.

The phrase is very old. The effect of the oil on the water is mentioned in a book written as long ago as the seventh century by the famous Bede. The story goes that Saint Aidan gave a cruse of oil to a young priest about to go on a sea voyage, and told him to pour it on the waters if they became

turbulent. A storm did arise, and the young man, pouring oil on the waters, did actually reduce them to a calm. Bede says that he had the story from "a most creditable man in holy orders."

Ointment, Fly in; see *Fly in the Ointment*.

Old Adam

"The old Adam of custom is stronger than the inhibitions of religion," says a commentator on the ways of the countries in which the system of avenging wrongs by feuds is tolerated. The "old Adam" refers to the ancient belief that our first father, Adam, as the head of unredeemed man, stands for "original sin," and is a man without regenerating grace. "The second Adam," "the new Adam," etc., are names accorded sometimes to Christ, who is called also "the new birth unto righteousness."

The Mohammedans say that Adam, the first man, fell on Mount Serendib, in Ceylon, where there is a curious impression in the granite resembling a human foot, more than five feet long and two and a half feet wide. They declare that it was made by Adam, who stood there on one foot for two hundred years to expiate his crime; then Gabriel took him to Mount Ararat, where he found Eve. According to Arabian legend, Adam was buried on Aboucais, a mountain of Arabia.

Old Lady of Threadneedle Street

"When the 'Old Lady of Threadneedle Street' speaks, the financial world stops to listen," said a recent editorial writer.

Who is this "Old Lady of Threadneedle Street," to whom such respectful attention must be paid? She is no other than the Bank of England, so long the dictator of the world's finances. The bank is situated in Threadneedle Street, London, whence the

name. The bank was incorporated in 1694, the royal charter being granted to a corporate body called "The Governor and Company of the Bank of England." The business was carried on at first in the hall of the London guild of grocers, and remained there until 1732, when the bank moved to its present site at the corner of Threadneedle Street, by the Royal Exchange.

Old Nick

"Old Nick" is one of the numerous synonyms, to be found in many languages, for Satan, the devil, the Evil Spirit, etc.

According to some authorities, "Old Nick" is a Scandinavian wraith or spirit under the form and fashion of an old man. One writer says that the name is derived from that of Nicholas Machiavelli, the Italian who wrote of the advantages of a policy of deceit and dissimulation, but this cannot be true, since the term "Old Nick" was in common use many years before the birth of the Florentine writer.

A "nick," in Scandinavian mythology, is a water wraith or kelpie. There are nicks in sea, lake, river and waterfall. Both Catholic and Protestant clergymen in the countries in which a belief in the nicks persisted strove to combat the idea in the minds of the people of their flocks.

Olive Branch

To extend the olive branch means to make an offer of peace. This is a very ancient figure of speech, since the use of the olive branch as a flag of truce dates back to remote times. The vanquished in war who sued for peace carried olive branches in their hands, and an olive twig in the hand of a king (on a coin or medal) as in the case of Numa, King of Rome, indicated that his reign was one of peace.

The olive has been used as a symbol of chastity, of fruitfulness, of merit, of prosperity and of victory, as well as of peace. In ancient Greece a crown of olive twigs was the highest distinction of a citizen who deserved well of his country. The highest prize in the ancient Olympic games (revived in recent years) was a crown of olive leaves. In the fifty-second psalm, David says: "I am like a green olive tree in the house of God."

Olla Podrida

"This book is a veritable hodge-podge, an olla podrida of rare and unusual bits of ancient and modern knowledge, mixed and seasoned with the rare and spontaneous wit of the author," says a book review.

"Olla podrida" is a Spanish term, and means, literally, "rotten pot." One writer calls it, "a dish so-called from its miscellaneous contents, a stew made of meat, fish, poultry, vegetables and other ingredients." The dish is called sometimes "olla española," and is very common in Spain. It is cooked in a closed pot, and is always highly seasoned with pepper and garlic. The French have a dish that is somewhat similar and is called "pot pourri," while the Scotch have their "hotch potch."

It is easy to understand why a book or an article containing an assortment of printed matter should be called, sometimes, an "olla podrida."

Omega, see *Alpha and Omega*.

On the Rostrum

"Next week the delegates will rally round the rostrum, and will there voice their opinion of the state of the nation," said a writer on politics.

By "rostrum" is meant a place whence orators address the public. More properly, the word should

be "rostra," which is the plural form of "rostrum," meaning "beak," in Latin. The "rostra" were the beaks of ships captured from the Carthaginians by the Romans, and set up in Rome to adorn the public platform in the Forum from which orators addressed the people. Hence, the platform itself acquired the title "rostra," or "rostrum."

From ancient times, the beaks or prows of ships have been a favorite decoration for columns, etc. The tall Columbus monument in New York City is so adorned.

On the Tapis

The phrase, "on the tapis," means "on the table," or "under consideration." There are two pronunciations of the word "tapis"; one is the English, with every letter pronounced, and the other (more frequent in the phrase "on the tapis") is the French, "ta-pe."

One definition of the phrase reads, "on the carpet; under consideration; now being ventilated." It is an English-French phrase, referring to the tapis or cloth with which the table of a chamber is covered, and on which are laid the motions which are before the house.

The word "tapis" itself means tapestry, or similar material, that is used for hangings, curtains, table covers, etc. The phrase "on the tapis" is of considerable antiquity in English literature.

On to Hecuba

"On to Hecuba" is an old classical allusion meaning, "Get on with your story," or "Don't beat about the bush so much; let's have the main point of your yarn."

Hecuba, wife of Priam, King of Troy, was a favorite subject of Greek dramatists and other writ-

ers, owing to the tragic features of her history. She was the mother of Hector, Paris, Cassandra and many others. On the fall of Troy she fell into the hands of Ulysses, and was carried away to Greece as a slave.

At Thracian Chersonesus her daughter Polyxena was sacrificed by the Greeks, whereupon Hecuba avenged the deaths of her many children by killing Polymestor, King of Thrace, who had murdered her son Polydorus. Being pursued, she was changed into a dog, and threw herself into the sea. The place where she perished was called for long by the Greeks the "dog's grave."

Once in a Blue Moon

Anything that happens "once in a blue moon" occurs very seldom. "Do you ever see Soandso?" asks one man of another. "Oh, I run across him once in a blue moon," is the answer.

"Blue" is called a favorite adjective in slang phrases and colloquial expressions; for instance, we have "blue fear" and "blue funk" and "the blues." The indefinite period "once in a blue moon" was a favorite with the late Mary E. Braddon, the English novelist, judging from the frequency with which she used the expression. The moon will not be blue, it is said, until the "Greek calends," or, as they say in Ireland, until "Tib's eve," a time which will never come. But "once in a blue moon" does not mean never but very rarely.

The English satirist Swift, author of "Gulliver's Travels," uses the strange expression, "to blush like a blue dog," meaning, not to blush at all.

Open Sesame

If you possess the "open sesame" to anything, you have the key or charm by which it may be opened,

or by means of which difficulties may be removed. It was the charm by which the door of the robbers' cavern was made to fly open, in the Arabian Nights tale of "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves."

The magic words were overheard by Ali Baba, concealed in a tree near the robbers' nest. When the captain of the thieves pronounced them the door opened. Later, after the robbers had departed, Ali Baba used the same words and was thus able to carry off much of the thieves' hoard. By means of threats Cassim, brother of Ali Baba, obtained the secret from him, but after he had entered the cavern by means of the magic words, he forgot them when he was ready to depart, the door locking him in. The robbers found him there and killed him. In vain he had called out to the door, "Open, barley." Sesame is the name of a grain and is pronounced "ses-a-me," in three syllables.

Oslerize

To "Oslerize" means to put quietly out of the way, figuratively speaking—that is, to consider a person as of no more use, having passed the prime of life. The word is taken from some remarks made in an address by Sir William Osler, who was one of the most famous of the world's physicians.

Doctor Osler, after having reached a position at the very apex of his profession in the United States, was called to the exalted position of regius, or royal, professor of medicine at Oxford University in England. Before leaving Johns Hopkins University, in Baltimore, he made an address in which he referred to "the comparative uselessness of men over forty years of age," and declared that if the discoveries made by men after they had attained that age were subtracted from the sum total of human progress, it would make very little difference to the world.

The press, and especially the "paragraphers," immediately seized upon his remarks and distorted them, attributing to the distinguished physician a disposition to chloroform men over forty. For the rest of his life (Sir William died in 1919), the words rose continually to plague him.

Ossa upon Pelion

"Piling Ossa upon Pelion" means making desperate but fruitless efforts, or piling one difficulty upon another. The expression goes back to very ancient Greek mythology, and refers to the war waged by the Titans against Jupiter and the other gods on Olympus.

Ossa was a steep, conical peak in Thessaly; Pelion was a high wooded mountain nearby. According to the classic myth, in the attempt to scale Mount Olympus, the home of the gods, the Titans placed Pelion upon Ossa. Three times they made the attempt, and were beaten back each time by the lightnings of Jupiter. "With the gleam of the lightning the Titans were blinded, by the earthquake they were laid low, with the flames they were well nigh consumed," says one writer.

Ostracize

The word "ostracize" affords an interesting example of a figure of speech that has become embedded in the English language. We get it from the Greek "ostrakon," a tile or shell, because the votes inflicting the penalty of ostracism were inscribed on tiles or shells.

Ostracism means banishment or exclusion from social intercourse. In the ancient days in Greece it meant banishment for ten years, of such persons as were thought to be dangerous to the state. The votes were given by shells; each man marked upon his

shell the name of the person he wished to banish. If the same name was upon the majority of 6000 shells cast in Athens, the person was sentenced to banishment. The most upright and most distinguished citizens fell under this sentence; and the Athenians finally abolished it, as the Syracusans did a similar custom among them. Among the illustrious Athenians who were driven from the city by this custom of ostracism were Themistocles, Thucydides, Cimon and Aristides.

Out-Herod Herod

This expression, "to out-Herod Herod," means to outdo or exceed in violence. We get the expression from Shakespeare, who uses it in "Hamlet," act ii, scene 2. This is the famous scene in which Hamlet gives advice to the players. He warns them against tearing a passion to tatters, and says: "I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-Herods Herod."

The character of Herod in the old mystery plays which preceded the modern drama was always portrayed as that of a violent man, as befitted one who was guilty of the killing of the innocents. One writer says of this expression: "To out-Herod Herod means to outdo in wickedness, violence or wrath the worst of tyrants. Herod, who destroyed the babes of Bethlehem, was made (in the ancient mysteries) a ranting, roaring tyrant; the extravagance of his rant being the measure of his bloody-mindedness."

Outside the Pale

"Let both parties agree to place such personal attacks outside the pale of legitimate political activity," said an editorial writer.

By "outside the pale" is meant "beyond the

bounds." In using the expression, the writer went to the fields of literature, geography and history. "Pale" means a bounded space or field, especially one that is delimited by pales, or stakes. But it means also a territory or district within certain bounds, especially one that is set aside for a race or people whom it is desired to keep under control. Thus, before the war there was a Jewish pale in Russia.

One of the most famous pales in history was the English Pale in Ireland, the name applied to that part of the island which was dominated by the English, and in which the English law was acknowledged and enforced. For some centuries after the conquest of Ireland by King Henry II of England, the dominion of the latter country was limited to the Pale. Its extent varied with the waxing and waning of the English power.

Over the Left

Probably most people know that "over the left" or "over the left shoulder" is an expression that is used to indicate that a speaker means exactly the opposite of what he is saying—for example, "I wish him good luck—over the left," is anything but an expression of good will.

It is believed that "over the left" is connected with morganatic or "left-handed" marriage, when a man of royal rank marries a woman of inferior station, and gives his left hand to the bride instead of the right. In an old court record of 1705 we find an account of the prosecution of a man for "cursing the court" by saying, when a judgment had been rendered against him, "God bless you, over the left shoulder."

The court held that the use of such words arose to the "degree of an imprecation or curse, the words

of the curse being the most contemptible that can ordinarily be used."

Ps and Qs

Probably every one of us—especially those of an older generation—has been told at some time or other to "mind your Ps and Qs." That means, in simpler language, to "mind what you're about," "to look sharp."

Several explanations have been given of the phrase, but none seems to be wholly satisfactory. The following is suggested by one authority:

"In the reign of King Louis XIV of France, when wigs of unwieldy size were worn and bows were made with great formality, two things were specially required—a 'step' with the feet and a low bend of the body. In the latter the wig would be very apt to get deranged, and even to fall off. The caution, therefore, of the French dancing master to his pupils was, 'Mind your Ps (that is, your "pieds," feet) and Qs (that is "queues," wigs).'"

Painting the Lily

"We need not paint the lily of his perfections; he is known to all the city as its one perfect flower," said a satirical editorial writer of an official to whom he was opposed. To paint the lily means to send forth the praises of someone or something to too great an extent; to overdraw the picture; to add perfection to perfection's self. The expression is a very old one in English literature; Shakespeare uses it in "King John," where he says:

"To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet,
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess."

The lily to which reference is made in the Gospel

according to St. Matthew (chapter vi, verse 28) is the *lilium candidum*, a tall, majestic plant, common in Palestine. It is bell-shaped, with white petals and golden yellow stamens. There is a tradition that the lily sprang from the repentant tears of Eve as she went forth from Paradise.

Pale, Outside of; see *Outside the Pale*.

Palm, Winning; see *Winning the Palm*.

Pamby, Namby; see *Namby Pamby*.

Pan, Pipes of; see *Pipes of Pan*.

Pandora's Box

In classic myth, Pandora was the first mortal woman, created by Vulcan at the behest of Jupiter. The story goes that Prometheus made an image, and stole fire from heaven to endow it with life. In revenge Jupiter told Vulcan to make a female statue, and gave to the resulting Pandora a box, which she was to present to the man who married her.

Prometheus distrusted Jupiter and his gifts, but Epimetheus, his brother, married the beautiful Pandora and received the box. According to one account—there are some variations—as soon as the bridegroom received the box all the evils to which flesh is heir flew forth and have ever since continued to afflict the world. The last thing that flew from the box was hope.

Another account says that the box contained not ills but blessings, and that Pandora's curiosity impelled her to open the box against the direct command of Jupiter. When she did so all the blessings escaped but hope.

Paradise of Fools; see *Fools' Paradise*.

Partington, Dame; see *Dame Partington*.

Pass, Selling the; see *Selling the Pass*.

Passing the Buck

It may be said, perhaps, that the expression, "passing the buck" is not, strictly speaking, a figure

of speech, but rather a slang term. But almost all slang is figurative language; if it has elements of merit it becomes part of the permanent language of a people.

"Passing the buck" comes from the card table. It means, as probably most readers know, to avoid responsibility. Webster's New International Dictionary says that "in various card games, the buck is a counter or other object placed on the table before the dealer, and passed by him to the next dealer, to prevent mistakes as to the position of the deal; also, in poker, a marker sometimes put into a jack pot, another jack pot being in order when the deal passes to him who holds the buck."

It is easy to see, therefore, why "passing the buck" has come to acquire the meaning it has in every-day usage.

Patches, Purple; see *Purple Patches*.

Patient as Griselda

For centuries Griselda has been used by writers as a synonym for and model of patience. She figures in the popular stories of medieval days of Italy, France, England and other countries.

She was, according to one account, the daughter of a charcoal burner, but became the wife of a nobleman. She was very humble and obedient, and her husband put her to severe tests of her patience and humility. The tale of Griselda was probably invented by some ancient moralist, who used it to point the following moral: If Griselda submitted without a murmur to all the trials that were put upon her by her husband, how much more ought we to submit without repining to the trials sent to us by God. Chaucer used the story of Griselda (sometimes spelled Grisilda) as the foundation of "The Clerk's

Tale" in the "Canterbury Tales," and Maria Edgeworth wrote a novel entitled "The Modern Griselda."

Paul and Peter, see *Peter and Paul*.

Paying on the Nail

To pay on the nail means, simply, to pay ready cash. It is equivalent to "cash on the spot."

Just why we should say "pay on the nail" or "down on the nail" is not quite clear, unless we accept the theory that it comes from a Latin word "ungulus" (derived from "unguis," a nail, claw or hoof) and that the Latin "ungulus" means a reckoning. However, the saying is very old. In "Recollections," by O'Keefe, it is recorded that in the center of Limerick Exchange there is a pillar with a circular plate of copper about three feet in diameter, called "the Nail," on which the earnest of all stock exchange transactions has to be paid. A similar custom prevailed at Bristol, England, where there were four pillars, called "Nails," in front of the exchange, for a similar purpose. In Liverpool Exchange there is a plate of copper called "the Nail" on which bargains are settled.

Paying Through the Nose

Giving a fancy price for anything, much more than it is worth, is sometimes called "paying through the nose." It means, also, as a variation, paying in dribblets or installments, which require generally the payment of a higher price.

Other writers declare that the origin of the phrase is unknown. In the olden days in Sweden there was a poll tax which was called a nose tax; it was a penny per nose or poll; the latter word means head.

The Danes levied a house tax on the Irish in the ninth century and inflicted on those unwilling or un-

able to pay the barbarous punishment of slitting the nose.

Peace, Dove of; see *Dove of Peace*.

Pecksniffian

The term "Pecksniffian" means "hypocritical," in a very hateful sense. It is derived from the character of Mr. Pecksniff, in Dickens's story, "Martin Chuzzlewit," of whom Webster's New International Dictionary says:

"A canting hypocrite; although using every form of deception and rascality to advance his own interests, he continually utters moral precepts and pretends to virtue even in drunkenness and in the shame which discovery of his duplicity brings."

Dickens says, "It was a special quality, among the many admirable qualities possessed by Mr. Pecksniff, that the more he was found out, the more hypocrisy he practised. Let him be discomfited in one quarter, and he refreshed and recompensed himself by carrying the war into another."

Peeping Tom

"Peeping Tom" is a "fightin' word"—that is, calling a man a "Peeping Tom" is an invitation to fight, so execrable has become the reputation of the original person to bear the name.

He was "Peeping Tom" of Coventry, in England, the man who used a peep-hole to look at the Lady Godiva when she rode through the town "clothed only with chastity," as Tennyson says. Tradition tells us that he was a tailor, and that he was stricken with blindness for disobeying the order commanding all the people of the town not to look at the Countess when she made her famous ride. It will be remembered that she pleaded with her husband,

the Earl Leofric of Mercia, to remit an oppressive tax laid on the poor people, and that he offered to do so if she would ride unclothed through the town. Tennyson wrote of Peeping Tom:

"One low churl, compact of thankless earth, the fatal byword of all years to come, boring a little auger-hole in fear, peep'd--but his eyes, before they had their will, were shrivell'd into darkness in his head, and dropt before him."

Peg, Round; see *Round Peg*.

Peg, Taking Down a; see *Taking Down a Peg*.

Pelion, Ossa Upon; see *Ossa Upon Pelion*.

Penelope, Web of

Referring to a public work which had been dragging along for years, and seemed in a fair way of never being done, a newspaper writer referred to it as a "web of Penelope."

Penelope (pronounced "Pen-el-o-pe," four syllables) was the wife of Ulysses. She was pestered by suitors while her husband was absent from home and at the siege of Troy. To relieve herself of their importunities, she promised to make a choice among them as soon as she had finished weaving a shroud for her father-in-law. Every night she unravelled what she had done in the day, and thus she deferred making any choice until Ulysses returned, when the unwelcome suitors were sent to the right-about without ceremony. The story is told, of course, in the "Iliad" of Homer.

Peripatetics

"Peripatetic" is derived from a Greek word meaning "to walk about." The Greek philosopher Aristotle and his disciples or scholars were called "peripatetics" because they held their meetings in a

walk (in Greek, "peripatos"), and tradition tells us that they talked as they walked together to and fro. Nowadays the term "peripatetic philosopher" is applied sometimes to a wandering wise man.

The grove in which Aristotle delivered his lectures was that of the Lyceum in the suburbs of Athens, Greece. Aristotle had a series of successors who taught his doctrines with some modifications. The philosophy of the Peripatetics was introduced into Rome probably by Carneades, and from that time, or at least from the time of Sulla the Dictator, it continued to be studied. One of the doctrines of the Peripatetics was reasoning by means of syllogisms, which for centuries held the highest place among the means and theories of education.

Peter, Blue; see *Blue Peter*.

Peter and Paul

We read often of "robbing Peter to pay Paul," which means, according to the dictionary, "paying one person with that to which another has a prior claim; satisfying one obligation by creating or leaving unsatisfied another."

It is said that the origin of the expression is found in the following circumstances:

"On or about Dec. 17, 1540, the Abbey Church of St. Peter, Westminster, London, was by royal patent advanced to the dignity of a cathedral; ten years later, however, it was joined to the diocese of London, and much of its property was appropriated to the repairs of St. Paul's Cathedral."

Hence it was said by a contemporaneous writer that "it was not meet to rob St. Peter's altar in order to build one to St. Paul."

Petrel, Stormy; see *Stormy Petrel*.

Philandering

"Philandering" means courting a woman, and leading her to think that you love her, but never declaring yourself. The word is often used figuratively as meaning flirting, as in the following sentence:

"The Germans have objects before them too great to throw into peril by philandering now with a reactionary foreign policy."

The word "philander" is taken, according to some accounts, from a character of that name in the poem "Orlando Furioso," by Ariosto. The heroine is Gabrina. When Philander had unwittingly killed her husband, she threatened to deliver him up to the law unless he married her, an alternative that Philander accepted, but before long she tired of him and poisoned him. The affair being brought to light, Gabrina was shut up in prison, but, effecting her escape, wandered about the country as an old hag. Knight after knight had to defend her; but at last she was committed to the charge of Odorico, who, to get rid of her, hanged her.

Picking a Bone

"I have a bone to pick with you" means, "I have a quarrel with you," or, "There is something unpleasant between us that must be settled."

It is said that we got this saying from an old Sicilian custom. At the marriage feasts of the poor of the island, the bride's father used to hand the bridegroom a bone, saying, "Pick this bone, for you have taken in hand a much harder task."

But "giving a man a bone to pick" has another, and a different meaning. It signifies handing him an appointment to a good political office, in order to get rid of him. Thus, long ago in England, a certain

prominent man was sent to Hong Kong as a judge in order to keep him out of the House of Commons. Of course, the allusion is to throwing a bone to a dog that is barking at you. "In those days," said a writer, "the usual plan to get rid of an oratorical patriot in the House was to give him 'a bone to pick.'"

Pickwickian

"The words of the premier are not to be taken literally; they are intended to be understood in a Pickwickian sense." So read a recent editorial.

The writer meant that the speech of the premier was meant to convey a sense other than the obvious one. "Pickwickian" comes from the famous book, "The Pickwick Papers," by Charles Dickens. One of the characters in the book is asked whether he had used an insulting expression in a common sense. He replied, that "he had not—he had used the word in its Pickwickian sense." Since the time of Dickens the word "Pickwickian," used in this manner, has become quite common.

Mr. Pickwick is one of the best known characters in the books of Dickens, and millions of readers have laughed at the amusing experiences of him and his cronies.

Pie, Humble; see *Humble Pie*.

Pied Piper

Anything or anyone that lures or leads away may be referred to as a "Pied Piper."

The name is based on the old German legend of "the pied piper of Hamelin." He was a magical piper who was hired by the municipality to rid the city of the rats which infested it. He performed the work by means of his magic pipe or flute, the music of which so charmed the rodents that they fol-

lowed him into the River Weser, where they were submerged and drowned. But the city refused to pay the price that had been agreed upon, so the piper took his revenge by luring away, with his magical music, all the children of Hamelin; they followed him into the side of a hill, which closed after them.

It is said that the legend is based on an occurrence in an old war, in which the children were carried away captive, and never returned. Some authorities hold that we owe to this story also the ancient saying about "paying the piper." Browning wrote a famous poem on the subject of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

Pierian Spring

In his poem, "An Essay on Criticism," the poet Pope wrote:

"A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring;
There shallow drafts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again."

The Pierian spring—to drink of which conferred knowledge, according to the old legends—was situated in Pieria, a district of ancient Greece, which was a chief seat of the worship of the nine Muses. (They were the goddesses of music and the other arts, history, etc.) Mount Pierus was one of the numerous heights which were considered sacred to the Muses. They had various other names; one of them was "Pierides," after the country or mountain.

Pig in a Poke

When you buy "a pig in a poke" you buy what is known as a "blind bargain"—that is, you do not see what you are getting, and you "take a chance."

The word "poke" means, in this case, a pocket, a small sack or bag. The French say, "Acheter un chat en poche," which means to buy a cat in a poke. The reference is to a common trick in days gone by of substituting a cat for a sucking pig, and trying to palm it off on a "greenhorn," or "sucker." If anyone heedlessly bought the article without examination, he bought a cat for a pig, but if he opened the sack he "let the cat out of the bag," and disclosed the trick.

However it may have been in the olden days, it is hardly likely that the trick would succeed nowadays, and so the expression, "to buy a pig in a poke" is one of purely historic interest.

Pin Money

A woman's allowance of money for her own personal expenditures is called "pin money." In England, such pin money is sometimes provided for a wife by a small rent charge which she enjoys during her husband's lifetime, subject to her sole control.

Long after the invention of pins, in the thirteenth century, the maker was allowed to sell them in open shop only on January 1 and 2. It was then that the court ladies and the city dames flocked to the shops to buy them, having been first provided with money for that purpose, by their husbands.

Later, when pins became cheap and common, the ladies spent their allowances on other fancies, but the term "pin money" has remained in vogue to this day.

Pipelaying, see *Laying Pipes*.

Piper, Paying; see *Pied Piper*.

Piper, Pied, of Hamelin; see *Pied Piper*.

Pipes of Pan

The name of the god Pan comes from the Greek "pan," meaning all, or everything. He is the per-

sonification of deity displayed in creation and pervading all things. As flocks and herds were the chief property in the pastoral age, Pan was called the god of flocks and herds. He is represented frequently as half man and half goat, the upper part of the body as human and the lower part as animal. This was intended to symbolize the dual nature of man—half earthly and half spiritual.

The "pipes of Pan" were the simple musical instrument, or whistle, on which the god is represented as playing. In the National Museum in Naples there is a celebrated statue of "Pan teaching Apollo to play on the pipes."

Plank, Walking the; see *Walking the Plank*.

Platonic

Although some cynics maintain that there is no such thing as "platonic love," and that it is not possible, the term has made its way in the English language to signify a pure, spiritual comradeship or affection between two persons of opposite sexes, with no element of desire.

The great philosopher Plato strongly advocated such pure affection, and it derives its name from him. He is called by some authorities the greatest thinker of ancient times. His name was Aristocles, but he was called Plato or Planton from the great breadth of his shoulders. He was born, probably at Athens, about the middle of May in the year 427 B.C., and died in 347 B.C. It is impossible, of course, to give here even a faint idea of Plato's philosophy. One of his interesting thoughts is that in his "Republic," in which he likens the human race to men who are prisoners in a cave beneath the ground, chained, with their backs towards a fire, gazing at the shadows on the wall and mistaking them for realities.

Playing Possum

"Playing possum" means) pretending to be dead; the expression is often used, in politics, etc., in reference to a person who wishes others to think he is a "gone coon" while he gains time for the making of plans to be put into effect when he "comes to life."

The expression comes from the opossum, or 'possum, the well known marsupial that is found in the warmer parts of North America. A magazine writer in "Everybody's Magazine" says that the opossum "feigns death under very trying circumstances, often being kicked and beaten, or shaken by a dog, without a sign of life; the true state of the affair can be ascertained, though, by throwing it into water."

"Opossum" is a word of Indian origin. Fossil forms of the animal have been found in various parts of the world, but the only living opossums occur in North and South America.

Pluto, Stern as; see *Stern as Pluto*.

Podrida, Olla; see *Olla Podrida*.

Poke, Pig in; see *Pig in a Poke*.

Pollyanna

A "Pollyanna" is a person who always "makes the best of things," no matter how black they may appear to others. The name is, of course, feminine, as was the original "Pollyanna," but there are male "Pollyannas" as well. To many minds they are even more irritating than "the female of the species."

Pollyanna is the name of a girl who is the heroine of a popular story by Eleanor H. Porter; the book is named after her. She plays what she calls a "glad game" of looking on the bright side of all the numerous trials which come to her. She is an incurable optimist.

While there can be no doubt that Pollyanna, when

she first appeared in print, cheered up the lives of many people by her unconquerable spirit of "making the best of it," it was not long before the critics descended upon her, and ridiculed her as an impossible being. They asserted, or implied, that on the whole her influence was bad, as tending toward making people fatuously content under curable evils.

Pons Asinorum

"Pons Asinorum" is Latin for "bridge of asses." It means something that should be easy of comprehension, but which "dunces rarely get over for the first time without stumbling." Some years ago an editorial writer said: "The 'pons asinorum' that is worrying most of the people of Europe is whether or not Germany will accept the Dawes report."

Explaining the phrase, the Literary Digest wrote: "'Pons asinorum' is Latin for 'asses' bridge.' The asses' bridge is the fifth proposition of the first book of Euclid's geometry, and it has been so-called from the difficulty of its demonstration to beginners. Used figuratively, it means an obstacle to be overcome."

The fifth proposition of Euclid calls upon the student to prove that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle (one with two sides equal) are equal to each other.

Popinjay

A "popinjay" is a conceited person, especially a man, who pays excessive attention to outward appearance, without sufficient regard to other matters. The word is derived from the popinjay, or figure of a parrot or other bird, formerly shot at for practice. (The word "popinjay" itself meant, originally, a parrot.)

In the olden days, the figure of a bird was decked with feathers of various colors, to resemble a parrot,

and was suspended from a pole to serve as a target. The marksman whose arrow, or bullet, brought down the bird by cutting the string by which it was hung, received the proud title of "Captain Popinjay," or "Captain of the Popinjay," for the rest of the day and was escorted home in triumph.

The use of "popinjay" to describe a "dude" is very old. It is employed in this way by Shakespeare in the first part of "King Henry IV," act i, scene 3.

Poppyland

Describing a prizefight, a sporting writer said:

"Maloney had Sharkey on the edge of Poppyland when the foul was called." He meant, of course, that the former was just about to be put to sleep—like one who has indulged in the juice of the poppy.

The sporting writer was in very good literary company in using the expression, "Poppyland." Shakespeare, in "Othello," wrote of "poppy and mandragora and all the drowsy syrups of the world."

The poppy is the flower from the juice of which opium is made. It is derived from the unripe capsules of the white poppy, but from the ripened seeds a wholesome oil is extracted and the residue is made into oil cake that is used for cattle food. The plant which yields the opium of commerce, and also the other products mentioned, is extensively cultivated in India, Asia Minor, Egypt, Persia and China. The poppy from which opium is obtained has white flowers, but there are other varieties with red, pink and yellow blossoms.

Porterhouse

Quite often the question is asked of newspaper editors, "Where did the 'porterhouse' steak get its name?"

There are two explanations; one connects "porterhouse" with the drink, porter, while another professes to see in it a reference to a man named Porter, who is said to have kept a tavern in New York or some other city, many years ago. The "Literary Digest" answered the question as follows, not long ago:

"The term 'porterhouse' designates a steak cut between the tenderloin and the sirloin; so called from first being served at a house where porter, ale and beer were sold at retail. In the old coaching days there was a tavern in New York, kept by a man named Porter, famous for its steaks. A traveler called and called again for a steak. Finally the innkeeper, who happened to be 'out' of steaks, took from his larder a large piece of sirloin put there for roasting, and cut from it a piece to broil. It was found delicious and was christened after the house and its proprietor, 'Porter House Steak.'"

Possum, Playing; see *Playing Possum*.

Pot Luck

Taking "pot luck" means "taking a chance" in accepting an invitation to dinner. "Come home with me this evening, and take 'pot luck,'" is a very common form of asking a friend to dinner. He will get whatever happens to be in the pot, without special preparation being made for him. The phrase is used in other connections. For example, a newspaper editorial said, "Our proposal is to take what amounts to 'pot luck' on our other claims against Germany."

The word "pot" is used in other figurative senses. "Pot boilers" are articles written for periodicals or publishers, and pictures, generally of small merit, drawn or painted for the sake of earning daily bread, or making the pot supply needed food. "Gone to

pot" means "ruined, gone to the bad." In this case the reference is to the pot into which refuse metal is cast to be remelted, or discarded as waste.

Pot of Gold

Whoever chases the "pot of gold" at the foot of the rainbow is foolish, because he pursues an aim that he can never attain. He is self-deceived, and wastes his time. He runs the risk of being classed among the foolish, the "rainbow chasers," who follow a dream.

The reference is to the old story that whoever finds the place where the rainbow rests on the earth, and digs therein, will discover a pot of gold. Since the rainbow arc has no foundation on earth, but is purely aërial, its end cannot be located. "There are breezy ones, silent ones, mysterious ones, all concession hunters, chasing the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow," says a writer.

Rainbows are caused by the action of the globules of rain on the rays of light from the sun. The semi-circular arc is due to the fact that all of the rays are at the same angular distance from the observer. The Biblical account of the origin of the rainbow may be read in Genesis, chapter ix, verses 11-16.

Pottage, Mess of; see *Mess of Pottage*.

Potter's Field

Why is the burial ground of the bodies of unidentified strangers and of unclaimed paupers called "the potter's field?" The expression undoubtedly had its origin in the Bible. "Potter's field" was a piece of ground which, according to the statement of Matthew xxvii, 7, was purchased by the priests with the thirty pieces of silver rejected by Judas, and was converted into a burial place for Jews not belonging to the city. Here is the passage: "And they took

counsel and bought with them the potter's field to bury strangers in."

In New York at various times there were set aside pieces of public ground to serve as "potter's field," but as the city grew these fields were converted into public parks, and now children play on land once devoted to public burying grounds.

Pow Wow

A "pow wow" is a meeting at which there is much talk. The word is applied principally to political conferences, caucuses, and the like, but it is not restricted to the world of politics.

The word is derived from the Indians. "Pow wow" is the name given by the early chroniclers of American affairs to the feasts, dances and other public doings of the red men, preliminary to a grand hunt, a council, a war expedition, or the like. "It has been adopted in political talk," says one commentator, "to signify any uproarious meeting for a political purpose, at which there is more noise than deliberation, more clamor than counsel."

"In certain of our Southern states," says "The Literary Digest," "'to pow wow' means to practice witchcraft. This use is still common. In colloquial use the word 'pow wow' in its political significance connotes a prolonged discussion."

Prester John

By the land of Prester John is meant any strange, far-off region, from which come wonderful tales of weird animals, fabulous riches, monstrous persons, etc. "Prester" is a variant of "Priest," and "Prester John" was, according to medieval stories, a Christian ruler and priest of a country somewhere in Asia. He was so-called because he converted the natives to Christianity.

Sir John Mandeville, the supposed author of a book of travels written about the middle of the fourteenth century, says that Prester John was a lineal descendant of the famous knight, Ogier the Dane. This Ogier penetrated into the north of India, with fifteen barons of his own country, among whom he divided the land. Prester John himself became sovereign of Teneduc. One tradition about him said that he had seventy kings for his vassals, and was seen by his subjects only three times in a year.

Prophet's Gourd

"The prophet's gourd" is sometimes employed by writers as a symbol or figure of speech to describe something that springs up quickly and grows to immense size in a very short time. An editorial writer recently likened the American merchant marine, built during the war, to a "prophet's gourd," saying, "The great trouble with the merchant marine is that, like the prophet's gourd, it grew to immense proportions in a very short time."

The prophet in the story of the gourd is Jonah, whose name has come to mean something or somebody that is unlucky. In the fourth chapter of the short book of Jonah we read how, after he had been delivered from the whale, and had preached repentance to Nineveh, he sat in the shadow of a booth to see what would become of the city. And in one night the Lord made to grow over Jonah a huge gourd, which sheltered him, and in another day sent a worm which devoured the gourd. This made Jonah angry, and he was also wroth because the wicked city of Nineveh had been spared. But the Lord reproached him, saying, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, and should I not spare Nineveh, that great city?" (See also "Jonah.")

Proud as Lucifer

The phrase, "proud as Lucifer" denotes unyielding spirit, even when opposed to authority that may not be contested. Lucifer was the name borne by the chief of the angels who rebelled against God, in the old legends that are related by Milton and other writers. Webster's New International Dictionary says that "according to a Semitic myth, the morning star fell from Heaven, and it is from this that the fate of the king of Babylon is compared in Isaiah xiv, 12, 'How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!'"

"The legend of the fall of angels, and such passages as Luke x, 18, Revelation ix, 7-10, led to the identification of Lucifer with Satan, as by Tertullian, Origen and others. The misconception was widespread, and, in English, was fostered by the poetry of Milton."

The name "Lucifer" is derived from two Latin words meaning "light bearing."

Purple, Born to; see *Born to the Purple*.

Purple Patches

Probably every reader has read books or newspaper or magazine articles, in which the author goes on his level way of undistinguished writing for long periods, and then suddenly bursts forth into passages of "fine writing." This is called putting "purple patches" on the work. In an editorial comment on a speechmaking tour made by a Presidential candidate, a writer said:

"The purple patches that are fairly conspicuous in his speeches in the West are not part of his familiar style."

The expression is very old, and was employed by the Roman poet Horace, who lived in the first cen-

tury after Christ. In his work, "Of the Art of Writing Poetry," he said:

"Often to weighty enterprises and such as profess great objects, one or two purple patches are sewed on to make a fine display in the distance."

Qs; see *Ps* and *Qs*.

Quarter

Possibly every reader is familiar with the phrase, "to give no quarter," in the sense of not showing mercy, but probably few know the origin of the phrase.

It originated, say the authorities, in an agreement between the Dutch and the Spaniards, in the old wars between those two countries, that the ransom of an officer or soldier should be one quarter of his pay. Hence, to "beg quarter" was to offer a quarter of their pay for their safety, and to refuse quarter was to decline such a ransom. To grant quarter means to spare the life of your enemy when he is in your power.

Of course, the phrase has spread to other fields than those of actual warfare. A recent political article says, "A commonsense campaign, with strict adherence to the truth and no quarter for the demagogue and no quarter asked, will be conducted."

Queen Mab

Many writers call Mab the "queen of the fairies," but, according to Brewer, who is an authority on such matters, "queen" in old English does not mean "sovereign," but merely female. Both midwives and monthly nurses were anciently called "queens" or "queans." Mab was the fairies' midwife; that is, she was the fairy employed to deliver men's brains of dreams. Thus, when Romeo says, "I dreamed a dream to-night," Mercutio replies, "Oh, then, I see,

Queen Mab hath been with you." Sir Walter Scott, in "The Antiquary," says, "I have a friend who is peculiarly favored with the visits of Queen Mab," meaning, with dreams.

But Mab is really the queen of the fairies, according to Drayton, Herrick, Ben Jonson and other English poets, while Shakespeare awards that honor to Titania, in "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Shelley wrote a poem called "Queen Mab," when he was about eighteen. In it he tells how Ianthe falls asleep, visits the court of Queen Mab in her dreams, and is instructed in the secrets of the universe by Ahasuerus, the "Wandering Jew."

Queen's English, see *King's English*.

Quest of Jason, see, *Jason's Quest*.

Question, Begging; see *Begging the Question*.

Quidnunc

We all know people whose favorite greeting is, "Well, what's the good word?" or "Well, what's the news?"

There's an old word that describes such people; they are called "quidnuncs," which comes from the Latin and means, literally, "What now?" A dictionary calls a "quidnunc" one who is curious to know everything that is going on; a gossip, and quotes the historian Motley as writing of "the idle stories of quidnuncs."

An English authority on words and phrases says that a "quidnunc" is "a political Paul Pry; a pragmatical village politician; a political botcher or jobber." There is an old English farce called "The Upholsterer, or What News?" in which the principal character is named "Quidnunc." It refers to something as being "familiar to a few quidnuncs."

The same authority tells about "quidnunkis," who are called "monkey politicians," but this expression is not used generally, as is "quidnunc."

Quietus

To get one's quietus means to be "put out of business," to receive a severe blow; to be killed. The use of the word "quietus" in this sense is old; it was employed by Shakespeare in the famous passage from the soliloquy of Hamlet, in which he says:

"Who would fardels bear, when he himself might his quietus make with a bare bodkin?"

The "quietus" was the writ of discharge that was formerly granted to those barons and knights who personally attended the king on a foreign expedition. When they were discharged they were exempt from the claim of scutage or knight's fee. In later times the term was applied to the acquittance which a sheriff receives in settling his account at the English exchequer; and, later still, it was extended to any discharge of an account. Thence arose its figurative use even to the present day.

Rag, Tag and Bobtail; see *Tag, Rag and Bobtail*.

Raining Cats and Dogs

We all know that when it's "raining cats and dogs" it is no time for sensible persons to be outdoors—but why "cats and dogs" instead of any other animals?

In northern mythology, the cat is supposed to have great influence on the weather, and English sailors still say, "The cat has a gale of wind in her sail," when the animal is unusually frisky. Witches that rode upon the storms were said to assume the form of cats.

The dog is the symbol of wind, like the wolf. Both of these animals were attendants of Odin, the storm god. In old pictures, the wind was figured as the head of a dog or wolf, from which came the blasts.

So the cat may be taken as a symbol of the down-

pouring rain, and the dog of the strong gusts of wind accompanying a rainstorm.

Rap, Not Worth a; see *Not Worth a Rap*.

Red Letter Day

Unless a person has been uncommonly unfortunate he has had, if he has reached maturity, his "red letter" days—days that stand out in his memory, and are recalled with delight. "Tomorrow will be a red letter day in the history of American sport," says an enthusiastic writer, referring to a coming big sporting event.

The term "red letter" is derived from the custom, now long established, of marking saints' days, legal holidays, and dates of important events, in red, to distinguish them from other days of less importance. By its brightness, red has always been set apart from the other colors, and in ancient belief it was the color of magic. In "Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry," William Butler Yeats says: "Red is the color of magic in every country, and has been so from the very earliest times. The caps of fairies and musicians are well nigh always red."

Red is also called the color of gold; in thieves' "argot" a "red kettle" means a gold watch.

Red Tape

Everybody has had experience, at one time or another, with "red tape," and its choking effect on business, public and other. In a word, "red tape" means "formalism." Probably as good an example of the workings of "red tape" as any other is afforded by the following extract from an English magazine:

"There was an escape of gas at Cambridge Bar-

racks, and this was the way of proceeding: The escape was discovered by a private, who reported it to his corporal; the corporal reported it to the color-sergeant, and the color sergeant to the quartermaster-sergeant.

"The quartermaster-sergeant had to report it to the quartermaster, and the quartermaster to the colonel commanding the regiment. The colonel had to report it to the commissariat officer in charge of the barracks, and the commissariat officer to the barrack-sergeant, who had to report it to the divisional officer of engineers. This officer had to report it to the district officer of engineers, and he to the clerk of works, Royal Engineers, who sends for a gasman to see if there is an escape, and report back again. While the reporting is going on the barracks are burned down."

Repentance, Stool of; see *Stool of Repentance*.
Ribbon, Blue; see *Blue Ribbon*.

Rich as a Nabob

Not long ago a metropolitan newspaper spoke of "wealth that a nabob might envy." The word "nabob" has come to represent a man of unlimited wealth, especially one who has "made his pile" in a foreign country and has returned home to enjoy it.

The word "nabob" is a corruption of the Hindu word "nawab," which is the plural of "naib." Actually, it is the title of an administrator of a province and commander of the Indian army under the former Mogul empire. These men acquired great wealth and lived in Eastern splendor, so that they gave rise to the phrase, "rich as the nawab," later corrupted into "rich as a nabob."

In England the phrase was applied to a merchant who attained great wealth in the Indies, and re-

turned to live and spend his wealth in his native country. Macaulay speaks of "a bilious old nabob."

Rich as Cræsus; see *Cræsus*.

Riddle of the Sphinx; see *Sphinx, Riddle of*.

River, Setting on Fire; see *Setting the River on Fire*.

Robin, Round; see *Round Robin*.

Robin Hood's Barn

When a person talks "around a subject," instead of coming to the point, he is said sometimes to be "going around Robin Hood's barn."

The reference is, of course, to the famous Robin Hood, the legendary English hero, regarded as the leader of a band of outlaws who lived in Sherwood Forest. Robin Hood lived a carefree life, robbing the rich to give to the poor and "oppressing no righteous man." His encounters with the Sheriff of Nottingham are famous in English story and song.

Robinson, Jack; see *Jack Robinson*.

Rod, Aaron's; see *Aaron's Rod*.

Roger, Jolly; see *Jolly Roger*.

Rolling, Log; see *Log Rolling*.

Roman Holiday

"Butchered to make a Roman holiday," the writers say, when they desire to express the idea that someone is sacrificed to amuse the populace. The reference is, of course, to the gladiatorial games, in which men were compelled to fight against one another, or against wild beasts.

The custom of gladiatorial fights is supposed to have come from the East and to have been borrowed by Rome from the Etruscans. Its origin is probably to be found in the practice of honoring heroes, who had died in battle, by sacrificing the lives of captives. The practice spread to the funerals of all important men, the sacrifice being more interesting to the spectators by the captives' killing one another, and it still later became an independent form of

public amusement. The gladiatorial games were finally abolished by Theodoric about 500 A. D.

Rope of Sand

Putting one's hope in a "rope of sand" means relying on something that is an illusion, something that has the appearance of strength but is in reality useless. "The Literary Digest" says that the phrase came into use in the English language about the year 1600.

The same authority says that there is a Latin proverb which reads, "Ex arena funiculum nectis." Freely translated, this is: "You are weaving a rope of sand," that is, you are engaged in an impossible task. This comes from an ancient proverb recorded in Harper's "Latin Dictionary," edited by Lewis and Short. The authority cited for it is L. Junius Moderatus Columella, writer on agriculture, who lived about 50 A. D.

Ropes, Knowing the; see *Knowing the Ropes*.

Rose-Colored Glasses

Any person who sees life through rose-colored glasses looks only on "the sunny side." To him everything seems destined for the best, and he lives in the constant belief that things cannot be as bad as they seem, and that, even if they do seem hopeless, they are bound to take a turn for the better soon.

The French have a saying, "couleur de rose," meaning "rose-colored"; too highly or favorably considered; overdrawn with romantic embellishments, like objects that are viewed through glasses tinted with rose pink. A rosy light will soften the harsh outlines of almost anything.

The red rose, says Sir John Mandeville, an old-time English writer, sprang from the extinguished brands heaped around a virgin martyr named Zillah,

at Bethlehem, while the white rose had its origin in the brands that were not yet kindled at the same martyrdom.

Rosetta Stone

The key by means of which mysteries are solved is called sometimes a "Rosetta stone." Thus, a poet says that experience is the Rosetta stone whereby may be read the secret script that life has carved on the human heart.

The Rosetta stone supplied the means of reading the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, or priestly writings, which were a deep mystery before the finding of the stone, in 1799. It was discovered by M. Bous-sard, a French officer of engineers, during the French occupation of Egypt under Napoleon, in an excavation near the city of Rosetta. It is a piece of black basalt, 3 feet 7 inches in length, and 2 feet 6 inches in width, and it contains part of three distinct inscriptions. They are in the ancient hieroglyphic characters, in the demotic or popular language of Egypt, and in Greek. The great work of deciphering the hieroglyphs, and thus obtaining the clew to the ancient writings of Egypt, was done by the French savant, Champollion. The Rosetta stone is now in the British Museum.

Rosinante

The name "Rosinante" is a humorous one for a riding horse, especially when the steed is not one of good blood, but is pressed into the service of the saddle.

It is the name of the horse of Don Quixote, in the famous novel of that name by Cervantes. The name implied, according to one writer, "that the horse had risen from a mean condition to the highest honor that a steed could achieve, for it was once

a cart horse, and rose to become the charger of a knight errant." The book itself says that "Rosinante was admirably drawn, so lean, lank, meager, drooping, sharpbacked and rawboned as to excite much curiosity and mirth."

Webster's New International Dictionary says that Rosinante was "very lean, bony and full of blemishes, but regarded by the knight as incomparable."

"Spring is in the air," says a newspaper essayist; "let us trot forth Rosinante from the stable, and go forth, seeking what adventures we may find along the green way of the world."

A statue of Don Quixote, mounted on his Rosinante, was erected recently in Spain.

Rostrum, On the; see *On the Rostrum*.

Rough Diamond; see *Diamond in the Rough*.

Round Peg

"A round peg in a square hole," meaning a person who has somehow gotten into a wrong occupation, is a phrase that is probably very old, but its origin seems to be lost in the mists of literary antiquity. The Rev. Sydney Smith, who lived about a hundred years ago, is sometimes called its author, but the saying almost certainly antedates his time.

He wrote: "If you choose to represent the various parts of life by holes upon a table of different shapes, some circular, some triangular, some square, some oblong, and the persons acting these parts by bits of wood of similar shapes, we shall generally find that the triangular person has got into the square hole, the oblong into the triangular, and a square person has squeezed himself into a round hole."

Round Robin

There are times when it is necessary, or is deemed necessary, for a body of persons to make a

protest against conditions to a superior authority, but when none of the protestants wishes or dares to take the lead. Then they get up and sign what is known as a "round robin"—that is, a petition or protest in which the signatures are written in a circle, so that no one can tell who has been the ringleader.

It is believed that the name comes from the two French words "rond," meaning "round" and "ruban," meaning "ribbon." It is believed that the device is a French one, and was first adopted by the officers of government as a means of making known their grievances.

The American people heard a good deal, during the Spanish-American War, about the "round robin" method of petitioning, when some army officers who were dissatisfied with conditions adopted the "round robin" method of making complaint; none of them wished to stand forth as the spokesman.

Round Table

Those who sit at the Round Table are brave, worthy, noble gentlemen, who have won recognition and honor by their achievements. Mention of the Round Table is frequent in English and American literature, both ancient and modern.

Accounts differ concerning the number of seats at the celebrated Round Table of King Arthur. Some say that there were thirteen, in memory of the Apostles, the seat of Judas being always left vacant to keep in perpetual remembrance his treachery. But others declare that there were forty or fifty seats at the famous Table, with one place left unoccupied in honor of the Holy Grail, that was sought so eagerly by the knights.

It is generally held by historians that there is some basis of fact for the stories of the life of King Arthur, but the tales have been so expanded and

embellished that he is known almost entirely as a fictitious character.

Rubicon, Crossing; see *Crossing the Rubicon*.

Rule of Thumb

To measure by "rule of thumb" means to take no exact measure of something, but to use such means as are nearest at hand. It is rough, guess-work measure.

We get the expression from an old custom of measuring lengths by the size of the thumb. Women sometimes estimate inch lengths by their thumbs, and in some parts of England and America countrymen always measure by their thumbs. It is believed that the old measurement, a nail, "sixteen nails make a yard," has some relation to the length of the thumb-nail, although a sixteenth of a yard—that is, two inches and a quarter—certainly would denote a very long thumb-nail.

The expression, "under one's thumb," means under the power or influence of the person named.

Running Amuck

"He would not listen to reason, but insisting on attacking acrimoniously everyone who differed with him; it was a sort of literary running amuck," said a recent book review.

We get the expression "running amuck" from the Malays. It happens sometimes among these people that men, raging under the influence of opium, become so excited that they rush forth with edged weapons and attack anyone they meet, shouting as they do so, "Amoq! Amoq!" (Kill, kill!) Travelers in the olden days, before the influence of modern civilization reached those countries, left graphic descriptions of Malays "running amuck." "Shooting

up the town," in our own "wild and woolly West," might be called a sort of "running amuck."

The term is quite old in English literature, and was used as early as the days of Dryden, in the seventeenth century. It was employed by the poet Pope.

Running the Gantlet

Broadly speaking, running the gantlet means passing through an ordeal. It is sometimes held to mean to be hounded on all sides. (The word "gantlet" is spelled sometimes "gauntlet.")

The reference is to a punishment formerly in use among soldiers and sailors. If a man had disgraced himself—by cowardice, for instance—his companions, provided with ropes' ends, were drawn up in two rows, and the offender was made to run between them. As he passed the others inflicted punishment upon him. In some cases he was stripped to the waist.

A similar but far more cruel and deadly custom existed in the early days among the Indians of North America, who chose this method of killing or maiming their captives. They used hatchets or clubs or other weapons.

Rush, Not Worth a; see *Not Worth a Rush*.

Sabotage

The word "sabotage" is new in the English and French languages and others. It is so new that it is found in only the most recent dictionaries and encyclopædias. It means the doing of malicious, wilful mischief or damage.

"Sabotage" is derived from the French word "sabat" (pronounced "sa-bo," with the "a" as in "sofa"), meaning a wooden shoe. The connection between sabotage and the wooden shoes worn by

the peasants and working people of France and other countries is as follows: Some years ago, when there were labor disturbances in France, the strikers found that they need seek no further for weapons than their own feet. The heavy sabots proved to be a most effective implement for smashing windows and inflicting other damage on the property of the employers. Now the word "sabotage" is used in connection with other troubles than those arising from labor disputes. "Sabotage, sniping and bombing have been carried on in the Ruhr for many weeks," said an editorial writer some years ago.

Sackcloth and Ashes

To repent "in sackcloth and ashes" means to rue bitterly something that has been done. The phrase is old, and the custom of garbing one's self in sackcloth, and strewing one's head with ashes, in token of repentance, dates back to Biblical times. In the Second Book of Samuel, chapter ii, verse 31, we read:

"And David said to Joab, and to all the people that were with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner."

The sackcloth of those days was a coarse, dark cloth that was made of the hair of goats or camels and was used for sacks, saddle cloths and other rough materials. It made an uncomfortable garment, and was worn in sign of mourning, distress, repentance, etc. The same significance was attached to strewing ashes or dust on one's head. To mourn "in dust and ashes" is an analogous expression to mourning in sackcloth and ashes.

Sailing Close to the Wind

"For some time before the crash," says a newspaper in a description of the downfall of a financial

firm, "it was known that they were sailing close to the wind."

By this phrase, "sailing close to the wind," is meant acting just within the letter of the law—observing the outward forms, but really violating the legal or moral code. "Going to the very verge of propriety," is another definition of the phrase; a variant of it is "sailing within the wind."

The phrase, "sailing before the wind," means to meet with success, to sail along as smoothly and rapidly as a ship before the wind. "Sailing under false colors" means pretending to be what you are not. The reference is to pirate vessels, which hoisted any colors to escape detection.

Salad Days

The "salad days" are the days of youth, when judgment is still unripe and unformed, and when things are done that would not be done in later years. It is the time of rash adventure and ill-considered undertakings. While it is generally considered that these things are done in hot blood, a writer calls the "salad days" the "days of green youth, while the blood is still cool." Shakespeare, in "Antony and Cleopatra," speaks of "my salad days, when I was green in judgment, cold in blood."

"Salad oil" used to mean a whipping. It was considered a fine joke on April Fool's Day to send a person to a saddler with an order for a "pennyworth of salad oil." There is a French phrase, meaning "to have or partake of salad" (the French form is "avoir de la salade"), which means to get a flogging, derived from the "salle" or saddle upon which schoolboys were formerly placed in order to receive punishment. The same sort of block was formerly used in some of the English public schools, when flogging was inflicted on offenders for infrac-

tions of the rules that are now winked at or regarded as quite trivial.

Sale of the Winds

Speaking of a political leader in a certain state who was believed to hold the balance of power between two leading candidates for a United States senatorship, a newspaper editorial said: "It may be that he will find it profitable to 'sell the wind,' as did some of the ancient Norsemen."

It was the Laplanders who were said to drive a profitable trade in selling winds to the mariners, in the middle ages. In the same class was an ancient king of Sweden who was "in his time held second to none in the magician art; and he was so familiar with the evil spirits whom he worshiped, that what way soever he turned his cap, the wind would presently blow that way."

The belief in this power to control the winds persisted until a comparatively recent date; as late as 1814 there was said to be in the Orkney Islands an ancient dame who made a living by selling favorable winds to sailors. "The mariners paid her a sort of tribute with a feeling betwixt jest and earnest," says one writer.

Salmagundi

Not long ago a literary critic referred to the contents of a magazine as "a veritable salmagundi." Webster's New International Dictionary defines a salmagundi as "a mixture of various ingredients; an olio or medley; a potpourri, a miscellany."

The word is French and is known in American literary history as the name of a publication issued by Washington Irving. In his opening words he said, "As everybody knows, or ought to know, what

a salmagundi is, we shall spare ourselves the trouble of an explanation.

However, Irving was wrong, for not everybody knows, or knew, what a salmagundi is. It is "a mixture of minced veal, chicken or turkey, anchovies or pickled herrings, and onions, all chopped together and served with lemon juice and oil."

Salt, Above and Below; see *Below the Salt*.

Salt, Attic; see *Attic Salt*.

Salt, Grain of; see *With a Grain of Salt*.

Salt, Not Worth One's; see *Not Worth One's Salt*.

Salt of the Earth

To say of a man or a woman that he or she is "the salt of the earth" is to bestow very high praise indeed; Christ applied the phrase to His disciples.

Salt was used in sacrifice by the Jews, as well as by the Greeks and Romans, and it is still used in baptism by the Roman Catholic clergy. It was an emblem of purity and the sanctifying influence of a holy life on others. Spilling the salt after it was placed on the head of the sacrificial victim was considered a bad omen, hence the very old superstition that ascribes ill fortune to the spilling of salt. In the famous picture of Leonardo da Vinci, "The Lord's Supper," we may recognize the figure of Judas Iscariot by the salt cellar knocked over accidentally by his arm.

A "covenant of salt" was one which could not be broken. As salt was a symbol of incorruption, it symbolized perpetuity.

Salt River

Going up Salt River is a fate that is much dreaded by politicians, for it means meeting with defeat from which there is no return.

Salt River is an imaginary stream up which a defeated candidate is supposed to be sent, and whence

he is not supposed to come back. The origin of the expression is as follows: Salt River, geographically, is a tributary of the Ohio River. Its source is in Kentucky, and, being very crooked and difficult of navigation, it was in the early days of the United States a favorite lurking place for river pirates. These highwaymen were in the habit of preying upon the commerce of the Ohio and rowing their plunder up Salt River, whence it was never recovered.

Hence, it came to be said of anything that was irrevocably lost, "It's rowed up Salt River." By an easy transition, the phrase was applied to unsuccessful candidates.

Sam, Uncle; see *Uncle Sam*.

Sanctity, Odor of; see *Odor of Sanctity*.

Sand, Rope of; see *Rope of Sand*.

Sand Lots Orator

Discussing the question of immigration into the United States, an editorial writer said: "This is not a matter to be settled by 'sand lots' oratory, but rather by calm and dispassionate consideration of the important issues involved."

By his reference to "sand lots oratory," the writer harked back to a period about fifty years ago, when the name "sand lots" was applied to waste lands on the outskirts of the city of San Francisco. They were much frequented by men and boys belonging to the rougher element of the city's population, and many meetings of a political or semi-political character were held there. Among the men who spoke there frequently was Dennis Kearny, prominent as a labor agitator, and he became well known, in other places as well as in San Francisco, as a "sand lots" orator. His favorite topic was the subject of the exclusion of the Chinese from the United States, and his text was about the same as the expression in

Bret Harte's "Heathen Chinees," "We are ruined by Chinese cheap labor."

Sardonic Smile

By "sardonic smile," "sardonic laughter," "sardonic humor," etc., is meant laughter or humor that does not deserve the name, but is, instead, derisive, malignant or bitterly sarcastic. The expression also denotes forced laughter, forced smiles, etc.

We get the word "sardonic" from the name of the island of Sardinia, off the coast of Italy, and the expression, "a sardonic smile" means literally to grin like a dog. It has reference to the hideous distortion of the facial muscles produced by eating a certain plant, which was said to screw up the face of the eater, giving it a horrible appearance.

It is said that the use of the term "sardonic" can be traced back to the time of Homer.

Sargasso Sea

Speaking of a writer who used his language "to conceal thought," and floundered in a sea of words, a critic said, "His ideas floated in a veritable Sargasso Sea of vagueness."

The Sargasso Sea, which has lately been made the subject of extended study by scientists, is the name commonly given to a region of the Atlantic Ocean which is covered by a peculiar floating mass of seaweed, either in tangled masses of considerable extent or simply scattered twigs. Its exact location has been uncertain, as it was believed to change its place from time to time. The water is comparatively still. It was formerly held that the Sargasso Sea was a sort of "port of missing ships," where ships reported lost were held fast in the weeds.

The name comes from either the Portuguese "sar-

gaco" or the Spanish "sargazo," both meaning seaweed.

Saturnalia

Quite often we see the expression "Saturnalia" used in newspapers, magazines and books, especially in the phrase, "a Saturnalia of crime." Editorial writers, especially, seem to be fond of using the phrase, when there is an unusual outbreak of infractions of the law.

Saturnalia was an ancient Roman festival, held in December in honor of the god Saturn. It began on December 17 and lasted for several days, being probably originally an agricultural festival to celebrate the end of the vintage and harvesting. It was a season of universal rejoicing and merriment, which often degenerated into license, and during the Saturnalia no business was transacted. Slaves were allowed absolute freedom during the festival, and dined at their masters' boards.

Saturn was one of the most ancient of the gods of Rome and was called Chronos ("Time") by the Greeks. He was said to be the son of the heavens and the earth and to have possessed the first government of the universe.

Save the Mark

The expression, "Save the mark!" is used to indicate a sort of apology for conferring a title upon somebody or something that is not worthy of it. Thus, we have the example of a dramatic critic who did not like the plays produced in his city and who wrote: "The plays (save the mark!) produced in this city this Winter have not been worth the price of admission, save in a very few instances."

In the olden sport of archery it was customary, when an archer had shot well, to cry out, "God save

the mark!"—that is, "prevent anyone coming after to hit the same mark and displace my arrow."

The expression is a very ancient one, as used in its present-day sense of indicating contempt or impatience. It is found in Shakespeare's works more than once; in some places he phrased it "bless (or God bless) the mark," instead of "save the mark."

Saving One's Bacon

To "save one's bacon" means to avoid great and serious loss, sometimes by a "narrow scrape." A newspaper writer says, "If this measure is passed, the majority in the present Legislature will have little chance of saving their bacon in the coming election." An English poet wrote: "But as he rose to save his bacon, by hat and wig he was forsaken."

The reference dates back to the time when our forefathers took great care to keep the bacon which was hoarded up to serve as the Winter's supply of meat. The meat had to be protected from dogs, which would have made short work of it.

There is an old English saying which is no longer used—or survives, perhaps, only in some remote districts—"to baste your bacon," meaning to beat or scourge.

Sawder, Soft; see *Soft Sawder*.

Sawyer, Top; see *Top Sawyer*.

Scapegoat

"Scapegoat" is one of the most common used figures of speech in English, and has become an integral part of the language. It is Biblical in origin.

A scapegoat is one who takes upon himself the blame for another, or upon whom such blame is placed. In Leviticus xvi, 10, we are told that Aaron was commanded to bring two goats to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. "And Aaron shall

cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness."

The aborigines of Borneo have a custom similar to that of the scapegoat. They launch a small bark believed to be laden with the sins and misfortunes of the people.

Schlemihl

Do you know a person who is continually doing the wrong thing, whose fingers are all thumbs, who mixes everything up, although his intentions may be of the best? Well, such a person is a "Schlemihl."

The word means also one who has made a silly and desperate bargain, such as was made by the original Peter Schlemihl, who sold his shadow to the devil. He is the hero of an old folklore tale of Germany; the tale was used as the basis of a romance by Adalbert von Chamisso, a celebrated German poet, story writer and naturalist, who lived about a century ago. In the story Schlemihl gives up his shadow in exchange for the inexhaustible purse of Fortunatus, but gets little satisfaction from the bargain.

Scot Free

To go "scot free" means to get off without paying. The expression is applied sometimes to a man justly suspected of crime, but against whom there is not sufficient evidence to warrant bringing him to trial.

The word "scot" means tax or fine. A rather common literary use of the word is found in the ex-

pression "scot and lot," meaning a levy formerly laid on all subjects in England according to their ability to pay. "Scot" means tribute or tax, and "lot" means allotment or portion allotted. To pay "scot and lot," is, therefore, to pay the ordinary tributes, and also the personal tax allotted to one.

Among the authors who have made use of the expression has been Emerson, who wrote that "experienced men of the world know very well that it is best to pay scot and lot as they go along."

Scotch

The verb "to scotch" means to put out of the way or to deal with temporarily, not to dispose of finally. "We have scotched the snake, not killed it," says Shakespeare, in "Macbeth."

It is used incorrectly sometimes, as meaning to make an end of something. Thus, an editorial writer declared, "This is a formal announcement that the British Government will not abandon the Soudan, in any sense, thus scotching a report started in connection with the Egyptian premier's approaching visit to London."

The dictionary says that "scotch" means "to cut superficially; to wound; score, scratch." In its derivation the word has nothing to do with Scotland or the Scotch, but is akin to the word "scorch," meaning to burn superficially.

Scrape, Getting Into; see *Getting Into a Scrape*.

Scraping an Acquaintance

This is a very old saying, and is believed to have originated in the following occurrence:

The Roman Emperor Hadrian went one day to the public baths in Rome, and saw an old soldier, well known to him, scraping himself with a fragment of pottery, for want of a flesh brush. The emperor

sent him a sum of money. The next day, visiting the baths again, the emperor found them crowded with soldiers industriously imitating their comrade—that is, scraping themselves with bits of baked clay.

“Scrape on, gentlemen,” said the bluff old soldier, “but you will not scrape acquaintance with me.”

The Emperor Hadrian, one of the greatest of the long line, was born in 76 and died in 138. He reigned from 117 until his death.

Scratch, Bringing to; see *Bring to Scratch*.

Scrooge

When you call a person “a regular Scrooge,” or “an old Scrooge” you go about as far as you can go in the way of calling him close-fisted, avaricious and “tight.” Like so many other proper names and literary allusions that have become a part of the English language, Scrooge is derived from the pages of Charles Dickens. He is a character in the “Christmas Carol.” All his life he has been hard and grasping, but one Christmas Eve he undergoes a transformation when he is visited by spirits who show him that the true meaning of human life is revealed in kindness and consideration for others.

Another character in the “Christmas Carol” to whom there is frequent reference in writing is Tiny Tim.

Scylla and Charybdis

When a person is caught between two great perils, he is said to be “between Scylla and Charybdis.” The reference is to Scylla, a rocky cape on the west coast of South Italy, and Charybdis, a whirlpool in the Straits of Messina, nearly opposite the entrance to the harbor of Messina, in Sicily.

By the ancients the navigation at Scylla was looked upon as attended with immense danger, which, however, seems to have been much exaggerated, for at the present day the risk is not greater than attends the doubling of an ordinary cape.

At the whirlpool of Charybdis however, the navigation is really perilous, even to modern vessels, and must have been exceedingly so to the open vessels of the ancients. References to Scylla and Charybdis are quite common in ancient and modern literature.

Sea, Bride of; see *Bride of the Sea*.

Sea, Sargasso; see *Sargasso Sea*.

Seal and Hand, see *Hand and Seal*.

Seamy Side

We are often advised not to look altogether, or mainly, on the "seamy side of life," and we are called upon to pity anyone who has too much knowledge of such seamy side.

The expression comes from the fact that in velvet, in some carpets, in tapestries, etc., the wrong side shows the seams or threads of the pattern that is exhibited on the right side. Hence, to see only the seamy side means to see only the worst aspect of anything.

Two quotations may be cited as showing the use of the phrase. The first is from an old review of a play, "Alone in London." It reads: "You see the seamy side of human nature in its most seamy attire." The second is from a magazine article: "My present purpose is to call attention to the seamy side of the Australian colonies. There is, as we know, such a thing as cotton-backed satin; but the colonists take care to show us only the face of the goods."

Selah

Much ink has been spilled over the exact meaning of the Biblical term, "Selah," and a great diversity

of opinion exists as to its derivation. A critic of music named Mattheson, in a work written on the meaning of the word, rejected eleven explanations, and decided in favor of one which makes "Selah" equivalent to the modern Italian "da capo." That means, "from the head," or "from the beginning," and indicates that the music is to be repeated from its beginning.

Herder held that "Selah" denoted a swell, or change in the rapidity of the movement, or in the key. The Easterns, he said, are fond of a very uniform and, as it appears to Europeans, mournful music; but at certain parts they suddenly change the key, and pass into a different melody. These points, he thinks, were among the Hebrews indicated by the word "Selah." The balance of authority, however, is in favor of the former view, according to "The People's Dictionary of the Bible."

Selling the Pass

One who "sells the pass" is guilty of betraying his country for gain; that is he sells to an invading enemy the secret of the way in which his country may be entered and conquered.

The phrase was formerly in common use in Ireland, and was applied to those who turned queen's or king's evidence, or who impeached their country for money. The traditional story had it that a regiment of soldiers was sent by Crotha, lord of Atha, to hold a certain pass against the invading army of Trathal, king of Cael. The pass was betrayed for money, and, the Fir-bolgs being subdued, Trathal assumed the title of king of Ireland.

The literatures of other countries contain, of course, similar instances of those who "sold the pass." An interesting case from Roman history is that of Tarpeia, who opened the gates of the city

to the Sabines, and as a reward for their treachery was crushed under the shields of the invaders.

Selling the Wind; see *Sale of the Winds*.

Sending to Coventry; see *Coventry*.

Senses, Seven; see *Seven Senses*.

Sesame, Open; see *Open Sesame*.

Setting the River on Fire

It is said of a person with no great ability that "he will never set the river on fire." That means, according to one authority, that he "will never make any figure in the world; will never plant his footsteps on the sand of time."

The English have a saying, "He will never set the Thames on fire," and some of them explain it by noting the similarity between the word "Thames" and the word "temse," meaning a sieve. A person manipulating a "temse," or corn sieve, might conceivably turn it so fast as to set the wood on fire—but he would have to work mighty fast.

This so-called origin of the phrase, "to set the Thames (or river) on fire" does not hold water, however, when it is noted that the French have a similar saying with regard to their river Seine, and the Romans applied it also to "Father Tiber," and the Germans to the Rhine.

Seven Senses

When you're "scared out of your seven senses" you are really and truly scared—there's no doubt about it. Of course, generally, we have only five senses—seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting—but it seems that five are not enough to be scared of.

According to very ancient belief, the soul of man is compounded of the seven properties which are under the influence of the seven planets. Fire animates, earth gives the sense of feeling, water gives

speech, air gives taste, mist gives sight, flowers give hearing and the south wind gives smelling.

Hence the seven senses are animation, feeling, speech, taste, sight, hearing and smelling. The number seven has been considered by many races of men a holy number.

Seven Sleepers

To sleep as soundly as the "seven sleepers," or the "seven sleepers of Ephesus," is to indulge in a very long and very sound slumber.

According to ancient legend, the seven sleepers were noble youths of the city of Ephesus, in Asia Minor, who fled in the Decian persecution to a cave in Mount Celion. This occurred in the year 249 A.D. After a miraculous sleep and preservation for nearly 200 years, they awoke, but soon died. Their bodies were taken to the city of Marseilles in a large stone coffin, which is still shown in a church in the French city.

The names of these famous sleepers were Constantine, Dionysius, John, Maximian, Malchus, Martinian and Serapion. The story is related in "The Book of Miracles" by the famous Gregory of Tours. Sevens and Sixes, see *Sixes and Sevens*.

Seventh Heaven

To be in "the seventh heaven" means to be supremely happy. Many ancient peoples believed in a plurality of heavens, and the Mohammedans have a regular system, with the seventh heaven at the summit.

The seventh heaven, says Mohammed, is formed of divine light beyond the power of tongue to describe. Each inhabitant is larger than the entire earth and has 70,000 heads, each head has 70,000

mouths, each mouth has 70,000 tongues and each tongue speaks 70,000 languages, all forever chanting the praises of the Most High.

According to the ancient Cabalists, there are seven heavens, each rising in happiness above the other, the seventh being the abode of God and the highest class of angels.

Shakes, No Great; see *No Great Shakes*.

Shanghai

To shanghai means, generally speaking, to kidnap, but there is a special meaning, defined by Webster's New International Dictionary as follows:

"To drug, intoxicate or render insensible and ship as a sailor—usually to secure advance money or a premium." The word comes, of course, from the name of the Chinese city of Shanghai, and the presumption is that the practice of "shanghai" was once common in that port.

In the heyday of the sailing vessel in New York and other ports, about fifty years ago, it was not uncommon for a sailing master to "shanghai" part of his crew. When the master had reason to believe that he would be short of men on his sailing day he would notify a shipping agent. The latter would undertake to "round up" the required number by plying them with drink and then carrying them on board—or even, in extreme cases, by knocking them insensible. When the victim awoke he was on the sea and it was too late to protest. The agent, of course, received a fee.

Shibboleth

A "shibboleth" is a test word—one by which a person may distinguish a member of his own political party, or religious sect, or race, etc., from an

outsider. The word comes from the Bible (see Judges, chapter xii, verses 5 and 6):

"And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites; and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; then they said unto him, Say now Shibboleth; and he said Sibboleth; for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him and slew him at the passages of Jordan."

The word "shibboleth" is Hebrew, and means, according to Webster's New International Dictionary, "an ear of corn, or a stream, a flood." The same authority defines the word as: "The criterion, test, or watchword of something, as a party; specifically, a party cry or pet phrase."

Shield, Both Sides of; see *Both Sides of the Shield*.

Ship-Shape

There are, of course, ships where everything is not "ship-shape," but theoretically, and perhaps in most cases, a ship is a place of tidiness and order. Hence we have the expression "ship-shape." There is an extension of this saying, "ship-shape and Bristol fashion" which may indicate the high regard in which the ships of Bristol were held in former times.

When a ship is sent out under a temporary rig, it is termed "jury rigged," the "jury" in this case being derived from the word "jour," meaning day, as in the word "journal." That is, the rigging is completed while the vessel is at sea, and when the jury rigging has been duly changed for the permanent rigging, the ship is said to be in "ship-shape"; that is, in due or regular order.

Shirt, Bloody; see *Bloody Shirt*.

Shoddy

The expression "shoddy" means, nowadays, inferior, pretentiously vulgar, as in the phrase, "shoddy aristocracy," but it was at one time simply the name for the waste arising in the manufacture of woollens. About forty years ago the name was given a wider significance by being applied to the wool of woven fabrics that was reduced to the state in which it was before being spun and woven, and thus rendered available for remanufacture. Woolen rags, no matter how old and worn, are now a valuable commodity to the manufacturer; they are sorted into two special kinds, the rags of worsted goods and the rags of woolen goods, the former being made of "combing" or long-staple wools, the latter of "carding," or short-staple wools.

The word "shoddy" was also applied to clothing made of shoddy and supplied to Northern soldiers during the Civil War. It was of inferior quality; whence arose the figurative use of the word, since many manufacturers and speculators took advantage of the Government and made fortunes for themselves; thereby they and their families became members of the newly and suddenly wealthy "shoddy aristocracy."

Shoe Pinches

To say, "No one knows where the shoe pinches as the wearer does," as the old saying has it, means about the same as "It is easy to bear someone else's troubles."

The story explaining the very ancient saying about the shoe is found in Plutarch's famous "Lives." In the "Life of Æmilius Paulus," he wrote: "A Roman, divorced from his wife, being highly blamed by his friends, who demanded that he give a reason for

putting her aside, held out his shoe to them. 'Is it not new and well made?' he asked. Being answered in the affirmative, he added, 'Yet none of you can tell me where it pinches me.' "

The Romans had a saying, "A shoe that is too large trips one up." They meant, an empire too large falls to pieces; a business that is too great comes to grief; an ambition that is overweening overreaches itself.

Shooting One's Bolt

Sporting writers in especial are fond of using the expression, "to shoot one's bolt." When an athlete has given the best that is in him, but is not quite good enough to win, they say that he has "shot his bolt." For example, in an account of a tennis match, a reporter wrote:

"As on the former occasion, Miss Fry shot her bolt with this one magnificent effort, and was not the same player thereafter."

A "bolt" is a shaft or an arrow, and the word was especially applied to the short, blunt arrow fired from a cross-bow. A "thunderbolt" is a shaft cast from the clouds; "Cupid's bolt" is the arrow of the little god of love.

Shakespeare says, "A fool's bolt is soon shot," meaning that a foolish person shoots off all his arrows heedlessly, and leaves himself nothing for use in case of need.

Siamese Twins

Two things or persons that are inseparable—two friends who are constantly seen together, for example—are sometimes called "Siamese twins."

"Why 'Siamese?'" asks the writer of a letter to a newspaper. He says: "Why must all twins who

are bodily joined together be referred to as 'Siamese twins?' The popular impression, indeed, seems to be that 'Siamese twins' means twins that are joined together. It is true that the most famous of such joined twins happened to be natives of Siam and were, therefore, Siamese; but that is hardly a good reason why joined twins who are natives of England or the United States should be called Siamese. Sloppiness of language could hardly go further."

To which the editor of the newspaper replies; "This objection comes a few years too late. The dictionary gives the secondary definition of 'Siamese' as 'closely connected; similar; twin.'"

Silver-Fork School

"The author," says a review of a recent novel, "betrays a tendency toward the 'silver-fork school,' without, however, going so far as did some of the novelists of the Victorian period."

By "silver-fork school" is meant those writers who introduced into their novels mainly or entirely characters who belonged to the "upper ten" of what is known as "high society." These novelists were English, but they had some American imitators. Their people were so given to the usages and the externals of polite society that they quite forgot to be human beings, in many cases. Their mental, moral and physical lives were circumscribed entirely by the rules of etiquette and if one of them so much as used the wrong fork or spoon he was immediately overwhelmed by mortification.

The most distinguished members of the "silver-fork" school of authors were Benjamin Disraeli (Lord Beaconsfield), Lady Blessington, Theodore Hook, Lord Lytton and Mrs. Trollope. For the main part, their work is forgotten, but some of them, notably Lord Lytton, still find readers.

Simon-Pure

"Simon-pure" means real, genuine, true, sincere, not affected. "He is the simon-pure, blown-in-the-glass, dyed-in-the-wool friend of the public; none other is genuine," writes a newspaper ironically of a politician to whom it is bitterly opposed.

The term "simon-pure" comes from an old play, "A Bold Stroke for a Wife," by Mrs. Susannah Centlivre, an Englishwoman who was born in 1667 and died in 1723. In it a Colonel Feignwell passes himself off for Simon Pure, and wins the heart of Miss Lovely. No sooner does he get the assent of her guardian than the veritable Quaker shows himself and proves, beyond a doubt that he is the real Simon Pure. Before he can do so, however, he is treated as an impostor and is put to no end of trouble to prove his identity.

Sinews of War

"The sinews of war for the twenty years of agitation and organization that preceded the fall of the monarchy were derived by Dr. Sun from Chinese residents abroad," said an editorial.

At a very early date in the history of the world it was recognized that war could not be carried on without plenty of pecuniary resources. Hence the numerous references by ancient writers to money as the "sinews of war." Plutarch wrote, "He who first called money the sinews of the state seems to have said this with especial reference to war."

Another writer tells us that "money buys the sinews, and makes them act vigorously; men will not fight without wages, and the materials of war must be paid for."

The old saying, that "money makes the mare go," is, of course, only a variation of the one about money being the sinews of war.

Sirloin

There is an ancient story, which is generally believed, that we get the name "sirloin," used for a favorite cut of beef, from a prank played by an old-time King of England, who was so pleased by a slice of beef that he drew his sword and knighted the cut, dubbing it "Sir Loin."

But the story, although repeated many times and attached to the names of many English monarchs, is nonsense. The word should really be spelled "surloin." The first syllable, "sur" is French, and means "upon," being derived from the Latin "super." The second syllable comes from the French "longe," meaning "loin." In the United States the sirloin is the part of the beef that comes next behind the porterhouse.

Among the English monarchs who are said to have dubbed the beef "Sir Loin" is the famous mythical or semi-mythical Arthur. Another king to whom the story is attached is Henry VIII, and still another is James I.

Sixes and Sevens

Things are "at sixes and sevens" when they are altogether in disorder. This phrase is very old. Shakespeare and Bacon used it, as well as later writers. Many guesses have been made concerning its origin.

Some who have tried to trace it believe it to be an allusion to the troubles of Job (see Job, chapter v, verse 19), while others think it is connected in some way with six working days out of the seven days in the week. The editor of "Notes and Queries," a well known publication of England, connects "sixes and sevens" with the proverbially unlucky number thirteen. One author holds that the phrase

was originally taken from the game of backgammon, in which to leave single men exposed to the throws of six or seven is to leave them negligently and under the greatest hazard, since there are more chances for throwing those numbers than for any other.

Skeleton in the Closet

The expression, "There is a skeleton in every closet," is derived from the following story:

A soldier once wrote to his mother, who had complained of her unhappiness, asking her to have some sewing done for him by someone who had no care or trouble. In the course of her search for such an individual, the mother found one who, she thought from all outward appearances, must be content and happy. It appeared, however, that she was mistaken, for when she had told her business, the woman took her to a closet containing a human skeleton.

"Madam," said she, "I try to keep my sorrows to myself, but you must be told that every night I am compelled by my husband to kiss this skeleton of him who was once his rival. Think you, then, I can be happy?"

Skinflint

A "skinflint" is a man who is thoroughly hard and grasping in his dealings with his fellow men, as well as miserly and niggardly in the highest degree. Calling a man a "skinflint" has long been regarded as one of the grossest of insults. The word is used by Sir Walter Scott in his novels.

Of course, the word is derived from the fact that a stone, and especially so hard a stone as the flint, has no skin, and that one who attempts to take the skin off a flint is one who will let nothing, however

worthless, get by him. Therefore, to "skin a flint" means to be exceedingly exacting in making a bargain. The French have a saying, "to shear an egg," meaning the same thing. The Romans used to have a synonym for the skin of a flint or the "wool of an egg"; it was "the wool of a goat."

Sometimes the expression, "to skin a flint," is used to describe a feat that is quite impossible.

Skittles, Beer and; see *Beer and Skittles*.
Sleepers, Seven; see *Seven Sleepers*.

Sleeveless Errand

To go on a "sleeveless errand" means to go on one that is fruitless, or is sure to be without result.

The word is generally written "sleeveless," but there is good authority for saying that it should be "sleaveless." The word comes from "sleave," which is the knotted or entangled part of thread or silk, the raw edge of woven articles.

Chaucer uses the expression "sleeveless words," meaning thereby words that are like ravelings, not knit together to any wise purpose. Shakespeare, in a well-known passage in "Macbeth," speaks of "sleep that knits up the ravel'd sleeve of care," and in "Troilus and Cressida," one of his less known plays, he makes Thersites, the railer, call Patroclus an "idle, immaterial skein of sleive silk."

Milton uses the term also, in "sleeveless reason," by which he means reasoning that proves nothing.

Sloth, Slow as; see *Slow as a Sloth*.

Slough of Despond

We speak of a person's being in "the slough of despond" when he is so depressed in spirit that he is thoroughly discouraged and can see no hope for the future. The term is derived from Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," part 1.

The Slough of Despond was a deep bog which Christian, the pilgrim, has to cross in order to get to the wicket gate. This is at the very outset of his "progress," or journey, and he falls into the slough, or bog. To his aid comes his neighbor, named Help, and the latter extricates Christian from the bog. Christian's neighbor, called Pliable, accompanies him as far as the Slough of Despond, and then turns back from the journey.

Many famous literary allusions are traced to "Pilgrim's Progress." Among them are "Vanity Fair," the "Palace Beautiful" and "The Delectable Mountains."

Slow as a Sloth

Although the name of the sloth has become a synonym for slowness and laziness, and this animal has acquired a reputation for such attributes (even to the extent of adding an adjective "slothful," to the language), it is said that the reputation slanders him.

"This singular creature is destined by Nature to be produced, to live and to die in the trees," says a careful observer. "It mostly happens that Indians and negroes are the people who catch the sloth and bring him to the white man; hence it may be conjectured that the erroneous accounts we have hitherto had of the sloth have not been penned with the slightest intention to mislead the reader, or give him an exaggerated history, but that these errors have naturally arisen by examining the sloth in those places where Nature never intended that he should be exhibited.

"He travels at a good, round pace, and were you to see him pass from tree to tree as I have done, you would never think of calling him a sloth."

Smell of the Lamp

Critics often say of a literary production that it "smells of the lamp," when it shows that it is the result of long and hard composition. Sometimes they mean that it is not inspired, but is simply an outcome of hard work.

The Latin author Plutarch attributes the phrase to the orator Pytheas, who said: "The orations of Demosthenes smell of the lamp." He alluded to the current tale that the great Greek speaker lived in an underground cave lighted by a lamp, so that he might suffer no distraction from his severe study.

There is a similar phrase, "to smell of the shop," used sometimes of a man whose talk suggests too strongly his business or profession. We say of such a man, "Oh, he's always talking 'shop'!"

Smile, Sardonic; see *Sardonic Smile*.

Society of Mutual Admiration, see *Mutual Admiration Society*.

Soft Sawder

The expression, "soft sawder," is an old one, to indicate flattery, especially such as is "spread on thick" for a purpose. The words are believed to be a pun, between "solder" (pronounced "sawder"), and "sawder," a compound of "saw" (a saying). Soft solder, a composition of tin and lead, is used for soldering zinc, lead and tin; hard solder is used for brass, etc.

Many years ago Charles Greville, a famous English writer of memoirs, said, "They are disgusted at the soft sawder that is continually bandied back and forth."

An expression similar to "soft solder" that is sometimes heard, and that has an exactly similar meaning, is "soft soap."

Sons of Belial

One who is thoroughly depraved and wicked—beyond hope of redemption, in fact—is called sometimes a “son of Belial.” Less frequently, reference is made to a “daughter of Belial.”

The term is a Biblical one. The exact meaning of the word “Belial” is in doubt, but it is generally taken as denoting worthlessness and wickedness, and, secondarily, destruction. In the First Book of Samuel, chapter II, verse 12, we read: “Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord.” In the revised version there is a marginal note which explains this as referring to “wicked men.”

In later Hebrew literature and in the New Testament the name Belial means the same as Satan, and in “Paradise Lost” Milton gives the name “Belial” to one of the fallen angels.

Sons of Thunder

Pulpit orators and other public speakers who “thunder forth” their views win for themselves sometimes the appellation of “sons of thunder,” or “Boanerges,” which means the same thing, in Aramaic, or Greek.

The name was applied to James and John, the sons of Zebedee, because they wanted to call down “fire from heaven” to consume the Samaritans for not receiving Christ. In St. Mark iii, 17, we read, “And James, the son of Zebedee, and John, the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, the sons of thunder.” The story of the wrath of the two apostles against the Samaritans is told in St. Luke ix, 54.

“Lorenzo Dow, who is said to have reached the distant frontier settlements of Alabama along the Tombigbee as early as 1793, at the age of twenty-

seven, preached as a 'son of thunder,' " said a recent newspaper article.

Soul Above Buttons

If you have a "soul above buttons" you feel yourself to be superior to your present occupation, and fitted for higher and better things. "Merton of the Movies," working in a dry-goods store, and yearning to do the "better and finer things" in the pictures, might be said to have had a "soul above buttons."

The expression comes from a play called "Sylvester Daggerwood," by George Colman, the English dramatist. The hero, of the same name as the play, says: "My father was an eminent button-maker; but I had a soul above buttons, and panted for a liberal profession."

There is an expression, "He has not all his buttons," which means about the same as our slang term, "He is not all there"; that is, there is something lacking in his mental equipment.

Soup, in the; see *In the Soup*.

Sour Grapes

The use of the expression, "sour grapes" is very common—it is, indeed, one of our most familiar, every-day figures of speech, being used by young and old alike. It is known not only in the English language, but in others.

Its origin is the story told in Æsop's "Fables" of the fox who tried in vain to reach some grapes growing on a wall, and finally gave up in disgust, saying, "Oh, well, those grapes are sour, anyway!" In that way "sour grapes" acquired its definition as "something which is beyond our reach, and which

we therefore belittle and declare to be of no value." One authority declares "sour grapes" to be "things despised because they are beyond our reach; many men of low degree call titles and dignities 'sour grapes,' and men of no parts turn up their noses at literary honors."

Mrs. Gaskell, in the novel "Cranford," speaks of "a sort of sour grapeism, which made us very peaceful and satisfied."

Spain, Castles in; see *Castles in Spain*.

Spell Binders

The term "spell binders" explains itself, of course. It means those who bind their hearers in a spell and hold them enchanted—that is, with the eloquence of the orators. We hear the term quite often in a political campaign.

The name was first applied, humorously, to the Republican orators during the Presidential campaign of 1888. It is said that it was used first by William C. Goodloe, a member of the Republican National Committee. On observing that in their reports to the committee the campaign speakers almost invariably spoke of having held their audiences "spell bound" with wonder and delight, he dubbed them "spell binders."

Later, the newspapers applied the name to those leaders of the Republican party who held a jollification in New York in the fall of 1888, shortly after the election of Harrison.

Sphinx, Riddle of

The riddle of the Sphinx was a famous enigma or puzzle of antiquity. The story runs that Juno sent a monster named the Sphinx to ravage the territory of Thebes. This monster had been taught

riddles by the Muses, and she propounded one to the Thebans: "What is that which is four-footed, two-footed and at last three-footed?" In some versions this reads: "What animal is that which goes on four feet in the morning, on two at noon, and on three at evening?"

An oracle told the Thebans that they could not be delivered from the monster until they had solved the riddle. They often assembled to try their skill, but always failed, when the Sphinx always carried off and devoured one of their number. But at last the riddle was solved by Ædipus, and the Sphinx put herself to death.

The answer is "Man," who when an infant crawls on all fours, at manhood stands erect on two legs, and in old age hobbles with the aid of a stick or crutch.

Spider, Bruce's; see *Bruce's Spider*.

Spilling the Beans

When you "spill the beans" you upset or spoil everything. It is a very common expression, and slangy, but a true "figure of speech," nevertheless.

The ancient thought a good deal of beans, both as food and for other purposes. The Greeks used them as we use paper ballots, for elections. Magistrates and other public officials were elected by beans cast by the voters into a helmet.

There are many other old sayings about beans, besides the one about spilling them. The English say, "He knows how many beans go to make five," referring to a person who is wise, or "up to snuff." A horse that is full of fire or spirit is "full of beans." The French say, "If he gives me peas I will give him beans," meaning, "I will give him as good as he sends."

Spoke in His Wheel

"I'll put a spoke in his wheel," says a man, referring to his enemy. He means that he will do what he can to combat his enemy's plans or intentions.

It is held generally that the expression is derived from the time when wheels were made of solid disks or of wood without radiating bars. Such wheels are still in use in some rural parts of England for the vehicles known as "three-wheeled butts." There are no shafts, and consequently the horse has no check on the vehicle when descending hills. To remedy this, the front wheel of the three has some holes bored through it, and the speed is checked by putting a stout bar of wood, locally called a "spoke," through one of the wheel holes, thus effectually blocking the wheel.

It is interesting to note that the Dutch have a saying of exactly the same meaning as the English "to put a spoke in one's wheel."

Spout, Up the; see *Up the Spout*.

Spread Eagle

"His jockey rode him in the stretch with a tight rein; even so, he spread eagled his field," says a sporting writer, referring to a well-known racehorse.

"To 'spread eagle,'" writes an English authority, "means to fly away like an eagle with spread wings; to beat easily." The expression is used by the novelist Ouida in the well-known novel, "Under Two Flags," in which the author says, "You'll spread eagle all the cattle in a brace of shakes."

The expression, "spread eagle oratory," is used frequently by writers on politics. It means stump speaking that is "a compound of exaggeration, effrontery, bombast and extravagance, mixed metaphors, platitudes, defiant threats thrown at the

world, and irreverent appeals to the Almighty." It is believed to suggest the spread wings of the eagle. *Spurs, Winning*; see *Winning One's Spurs*.

Squaring the Circle

We say of a man trying to do the obviously impossible that he might as well try to "square the circle." An editorial writer says, "But 'squaring' the circle is nothing compared with these proposals."

As every student of mathematics knows, the allusion is to the mathematical question whether a circle can be made which will contain exactly the same area as a square. The difficulty lies in the finding of the precise ratio between the diameter of a circle and its circumference.

It is well known, of course, that the ratio is very close to three and one-seventh; but it is impossible to calculate it exactly. It is given sometimes as 3.14159, but the number has been extended by mathematicians to very many more decimal places. *Stables Augean*; see *Hercules' Labors*.

Stalking Horse

A "stalking horse" is something that is put forward as the ostensible purpose of a person or a party, while the real purpose remains concealed or unavowed until the proper time comes. Thus, when a man seeks a political office, but finds it desirable or necessary for any reason to remain behind the scenes, he sometimes puts forward a "stalking horse" to hold the place for him until he finds it advisable to avow his own candidacy.

Shakespeare says, "He uses his folly like a stalking horse, and under the presentation of that he shoots his wit."

The term comes from the hunting field. Fowlers used to conceal themselves behind horses, and went

on stalking step by step until they got within shot of their game.

Star Chamber

"Star chamber proceedings," to which frequent reference is made by writers of editorials, are actions taken in secret, sometimes without warrant of law. The term goes back to the history of England before the first half of the seventeenth century.

The Star Chamber was a tribunal or court which met in the old council chamber of the Palace of Westminster. It is believed to owe its name to the stars with which its ceiling was decorated. Its notoriety was gained principally as a criminal court. It could inflict any penalty short of death, and had cognizance of a variety of offenses. Pressure of every kind, including torture, was used to procure acknowledgments of guilt; admissions of the most immaterial facts were construed as confessions, and fines, imprisonment and mutilation were inflicted on a mere oral proceeding, without hearing the accused. The abuses of the court reached so great a height that it was abolished by Parliament in the reign of Charles the First.

Stately as Juno

We read, sometimes, that a certain woman is as "stately as Juno herself." This is a very high compliment, indeed, for, according to the olden tales, Juno was the Queen of Heaven and the wife of Jupiter. (Juno is the Latin name, as is Jupiter; in Greek the corresponding designations are Hera and Jove.)

Juno is represented in the ancient mythology as

a beautiful, majestic woman, clad in flowing robes, and bearing a scepter. On her head is a diadem. She was the mother of Mars, Hebe and Vulcan. The peacock and the cuckoo were both sacred to her with many glorious attributes, and often invoked seen accompanying her. She had her special attendant, Iris, the rainbow. The ancients endowed her with many glorious attributes, and often invoked her special aid as goddess of marriage. Her festivals, the Matronalia, were always celebrated in Rome with the greatest pomp, and there were numerous lesser festivals in each city in which she had a temple.

The extent of the reverence in which Juno or Hera was held is well attested by the numerous statues of her that have been discovered.

Sterling

Now a part of ordinary English, the word "sterling" was once a genuine figure of speech. Various accounts are given of the origin of the term. The one that is most frequently seen and is generally accepted is that of Camden, the old English antiquary, who wrote:

"In the time of King Richard I. money coined in the east parts of Germany began to be of especial request in England for the purity thereof, and was called 'easterling money,' as all the inhabitants of those parts were called 'Easterlings,' and shortly after some of that country, skillful in mint matters and alloys, were sent for into this realm to bring the coin into perfection, which since that time was called of them 'sterling' for 'Easterling.'"

Another account says that the word comes from "starling" ("little star") in reference to a star impressed on one of the old English coins.

Stern as Pluto

Pluto was the king of the underworld in the ancient tales, and all men were afraid of him. His name was never mentioned save with fear and trembling, and devout Greeks and Romans with a sincere belief in their gods prayed that they might not meet him face to face.

When the government of the universe was apportioned among the various gods and goddesses, Pluto received as his share the infernal regions, beneath the earth, and to him was assigned the care of the dead and of riches, since all precious metals are buried deep within the earth. He never appeared on the surface save when he had in mind some sinister purpose, such as the dragging down to the lower regions of some unhappy victim. On one such occasion he kidnapped Proserpine (or Persephone), the beautiful daughter of Ceres, in order to make her his queen and set her on his throne in Hades, the underworld.

Pluto was always represented as a stern, dark, bearded man. On his head was a crown, and in his hand a scepter and a key, to indicate his power. Stick, Cutting; see *Cutting Stick*.

Stick to Your Last

"Stick to your last," is advice that is frequently given. It means, talk about something or do something which you know about; don't venture into strange fields.

The story goes that at one time Apelles, the famous Greek painter, showed one of his paintings to a shoemaker, and that the latter found something at fault with the manner in which the artist had depicted the lacing of a shoe. The criticism was well made, and Apelles corrected the fault. Whereupon the shoemaker, thinking himself very

wise, ventured to criticize the legs, but Apelles "squelched" him by saying, "Stick to your last"—meaning, "You understand about shoes, but not about anatomy."

Apelles is one of the most famous names in the history of art. He was a contemporary of Alexander the Great.

Stick to Your Muttons

When you are speaking or writing, it is well to stick to your subject, unless you want to run the risk of having someone say to you, "Stick to your muttons."

We get the phrase from the French language, in which the most common form is, "Revenons à nos moutons," meaning literally, "Let's get back to our sheep." The phrase is taken from an old French play called "L'Avocat," ("The Attorney"), by Patelin, in which a dealer in woolens charges a shepherd with stealing sheep. He keeps forever running away from his subject; and, to throw discredit on the defendant's attorney, accuses him of stealing a piece of cloth.

The judge has to pull him up every moment with, "Mais, mon ami, revenons à nos moutons," that is, "But, my friend, what about the sheep? Let's hear about the sheep; let's get back to the sheep."

Stock, Watered; see *Watered Stock*.
Stockings, Blue; see *Blue Stockings*.
Stone, Rosetta; see *Rosetta Stone*.

Stool of Repentance

"Perhaps the Governor has seen the light; let him now take his place upon the stool of repentance, and the people of the State will extend the hand of forgiveness to him," says an editorial writer.

He got the expression, "the stool of repentance," from an ancient custom in Scotland. The "stool of

repentance" was a low stool that was placed in front of a pulpit. On it were placed persons who had incurred ecclesiastical censure, where they remained throughout the service. When this was concluded, the penitent had to stand on the stool and receive the rebuke of the minister for his offense.

The custom may not be altogether extinct. It is recorded that the punishment of making a penitent take his place on a "stool of repentance" was inflicted in certain churches of Scotland in the nineteenth century.

Storm and Stress

Any time of great agitation in politics, economics, literature, etc., is likely to receive the name, "Storm and Stress" period, although, strictly speaking, the name should be confined to one definitely fixed era in the history of Germany. "Storm and stress" is a literal translation of the German phrase, "sturm und drang."

It is the name given to the time of intellectual awakening of Germany in the second half of the eighteenth century, when German writers "found themselves," so to speak, and freed themselves from their former bondage to French models. The "storm and stress" era was closely allied to the general movement of romanticism, in Germany and elsewhere. It got its name from a drama, "Sturm und Drang," by Frederick Maximilian von Klinger (1752—1831) that won popularity.

Goethe's "Man With the Iron Hand" and "The Sorrows of Werther," Schiller's "Robbers," Klinger's tragedies, the criticisms of Lessing and the widespread "cult" of Shakespeare and Ossian were characteristic productions of the time of "storm and stress."

Stormy Petrel

As the appearance of the bird known as the petrel is believed to foretell a storm at sea, so there are persons who are called "stormy petrels" because when they are seen one may expect a stormy time. Thus, we hear of the "stormy petrels" of politics, of finance, etc.

The petrel is so named, according to tradition, from the Italian Petrella ("little Peter") in allusion to St. Peter, who walked on the sea. English sailors call the stormy petrels "Mother Carey's chickens." They are called "stormy" because in a gale they surround a ship to catch small denizens of the waters which may rise to the surface of the rough sea; when the gale ceases they are no longer seen.

Petrels are the smallest of the web-footed birds. They are smoky brown in color, with a broad band of white above the tail.

Straw, Men; see *Men of Straw*.

Stress, Storm and; see *Storm and Stress*.

Strings, Two, to a Bow; see *Two Strings to One's Bow*.

Study, Brown; see *Brown Study*.

Stygian Darkness

The term "Stygian darkness" is often used to indicate darkness that is pitch black, but the proper definition may be said, on good authority, to be "hellish, infernal."

"Stygian" is derived from the River Styx, the famed stream of classic mythology which flowed seven times around Hades. Over it Charon conveyed the shades of the departed. In "Paradise Lost," Milton calls the Styx "abhorred Styx, the flood of burning hate."

The tales about the Styx are of Egyptian origin. It is related that Isis collected the various parts of

Osiris (murdered by Typhon) and buried them in secrecy on the banks of the Styx.

In classic mythology the River Styx had a nymph of the same name, by whom some of the ancients swore their most solemn oaths.

Swallowing the Anchor

"Swallowing the anchor" is "sailor's lingo" for giving up the sea, for taking up one's residence on shore. William McFee, the well-known teller of sea tales, published a book with that title, and a reviewer said of the book: "Mr. McFee has abjured all dalliance with the sea, and his inclination to go down into the hold and fish plots out of bilge water."

The anchor is sometimes used in religious art as a symbol of St. Clement of Rome and St. Nicholas of Bari. The latter is the patron saint of sailors, while St. Clement suffered martyrdom by being bound to an anchor and being cast into the sea.

A "sheet anchor" means a best hope, or last refuge. The sheet anchor is the largest anchor of a ship, and is, in stress of weather, the chief dependence of the sailor. The word "sheet" is in this case a corruption of "shote," which meant "thrown out."

Swan Song

According to a very ancient belief, the swan, when about to die, pours out its soul in exceedingly melodious song. One old writer relates that "this bird, when wounded, pours forth its last breath in notes most beautifully clear and loud." In Shakespeare's "Othello," act v, scene 2, Emilia says, before being murdered, "I will play the swan, and die in music."

The phrase "swan song" is employed sometimes

to denote the last note, or passing away, of opposition. For example, a newspaper article tells of "the swan song of die-hard opponents."

The actual voice of the swan is not melodious to most ears, although there is one variety whose notes are said to resemble the tones of a violin, but to be somewhat higher. The ancients, however, could not seem to bring themselves to believe that a bird so graceful as the swan could have anything but a sweet voice. Hence the term "swan song."

Swans; see *All My Swans are Geese*.

Sword of Damocles; see *Damocles' Sword*.

Sybarite

A "sybarite" is a person who carries the love of pleasure and luxury to excess. We get the word from the name of the city of Sybaris, in southern Italy, the inhabitants of which were proverbial for their luxurious living and self-indulgence. They were of Greek descent.

The Roman author Seneca tells a story of a sybarite who complained that he could not rest comfortably at night, and being asked why, he replied, "He had found a rose leaf doubled under him and it hurt him." It is related that the Sybarites taught their horses to dance to the music of the pipe. When the Crotonions marched against Sybaris they began to play on their pipes, whereupon all the Sybarite horses began to dance, causing great disorder in the ranks of the Sybarite soldiers. Naturally, they lost the battle very quickly. The city of Sybaris was founded in 720 B. C. and was powerful and wealthy until the luxurious habits of its people brought about its downfall.

Sylph

In common usage the word "sylph" has feminine significance and is applied to a graceful maiden.

In the old mythology, the sylphs were semi-human creatures of either gender, but the English poet Pope made them so beautiful and graceful that they became associated in the popular mind with the feminine gender only.

The olden stories made the Sylphs the elemental spirits of the air. They eat, drink, speak, move about, beget children and are subject to infirmities as human beings are; but, on the other hand, they resemble spirits in being more nimble and swift in their movements, while their bodies are more ethereal and diaphanous than those of humans. They surpass human beings also in their knowledge of both the present and the future, but they have no souls, and when they die, nothing is left.

"T," Fits to a; see *Fits to a "T."*

Table, Round; see *Round Table*.

Tables, Turning; see *Turning the Tables*.

Taboo

Whole volumes have been written on the subject of "taboo," and it is of course impossible to give a full explanation of the term in a brief space. But in general it may be said that "taboo" means "forbidden." When a "taboo" rests upon something, or is placed upon something, it must be avoided at all costs.

Taboo, sometimes spelled tabu or tapu, is a native custom among peoples of low culture, whereby certain persons and things are cut off from tribal use and intercourse. In the earlier ages of the world, many races had systems of taboo; for example, among the Jews, who tabooed the use of pork, fish without scales, etc. Among many peoples it is taboo to touch a corpse.

Travelers have sometimes involved themselves in serious trouble with native races by violating, ig-

norantly or otherwise, the taboos of such races. The accounts of visitors to Central Africa and Polynesia, for example, contain many instances of such trouble. Tacks, Brass; see *Brass Tacks*.

Tag, Rag and Bobtail

The rabble, the mob, is sometimes called "tag, rag and bobtail." It is the English equivalent for the French phrase, "sans culottes." In recent years some writers have referred to "the mob" as "the great unwashed."

"Tag, rag and bobtail" is an old English hunting expression meaning a herd of deer. In an old English book we find the following:

"They hunted the deer, and were so greedy of their destruction that they killed them rag and tag with hands and swords." The word "tag" is believed to signify a doe in her second year, while "rag" means a herd of deer at certain times of the year. "Bobtail" means a fawn just after she has been weaned.

The complete original sense of the phrase, "tag, rag and bobtail" (it is rendered sometimes as "rag, tag and bobtail") thus seems to have been to denote a collection of sheep or deer, of all kinds, mixed indiscriminately.

Tailors, Nine, Make a Man; see *Nine Tailors Make a Man*.

Taking Down a Peg

To take one down a peg means to take the conceit out of a bragging or pretentious person; in other words, to lower his pride. There are two explanations of the phrase:

The first one says that the allusion is to a ship's

colors, or flag, which used to be raised or lowered by means of pegs; the higher the colors are raised the greater the honor, and to take them down a peg meant to pay less honor.

The second explanation has to do with an old-time drinking custom. At Oxford University, in England, a student who offends by lateness, reading at table, or "talking shop" there, may be punished by having to provide beer for the diners. The beverage is served in ancient silver cups, having pegs fixed on the inside to mark each man's share, or the limit to which he may drink; hence, it is said, the phrase, "to take one down a peg" means to punish a fellow drinker by imbibing his portion.

Taking the Cake

The expression, "to take the cake," meaning to win the prize, is properly classed as slang, but it should also be said that some interesting origins are ascribed to it. Many years ago, "Notes and Queries," an English publication, said:

"A short time ago I started with a farmer to visit Sutton Wales, near Hereford, and in conversation the gentleman mentioned that in his youth wakes used to be held in the different parishes of the neighborhood, at which the youths and men congregated to test their prowess in fighting and wrestling. The winner won a cake. I made a note, and asked particulars. He said the people were divided into sections. Those least skilful first commenced, the winner going on until worsted. The ultimate winner then claimed the cake, which was made beforehand, and put on top of a stick some eighteen inches long. This he held against all comers during the meeting and, of course, strutted about with the finest and best looking damsel he could lay hold of."

Taking the Hemlock

"To drink the hemlock" means to commit suicide, especially when the taker of the poison occupies an official position, or one of prominence. "But even he admitted that it would be necessary for him to resign if a vote of 'no confidence' were carried against him; this is the hemlock which the House of Commons can always press upon a Prime Minister," says a commentator on current events.

"Greek civilization, which regarded suicide under certain conditions as a noble act, advanced to the point where it had what was known as a state poison, which was chiefly composed of a species of hemlock, the seeds of which were compounded in a mortar as the first step in preparation," wrote a book reviewer, in a recent article. "It was the hemlock cup that Socrates drained while inflicting upon his gathered friends many philosophical platitudes." Socrates was the most eminent of the men who were forced by the Greeks to drink the hemlock.

Talking Turkey

Everyone has heard the expression, "Now, let's talk turkey," which means, "Well, let's get down to business." Some authorities say that "talking turkey" means acting or speaking in a straightforward and honest manner.

The story goes that two men, a white man and an Indian, agreed to hunt together for a day, and to divide the spoils. When the time came for a division, there was no difficulty in apportioning the smaller animals and birds—that is, each man took one of each kind until all were divided. At last, however, they reached the last pair, a crow and a turkey.

"Now," says the white man, with a great show of fairness, "you may have the crow, and I'll take

the turkey; or I'll take the turkey and you may have the crow." The Indian says; "Why don't you talk turkey to me?"

Tangy, Carpet of; see *Magic Carpet*.

Tape, Red; see *Red Tape*.

Tapis, on the; see *On the Tapis*.

Tartar, Catching a; see *Catching a Tartar*.

Tartuffe

Like Pecksniff, in Dickens' "Martin Chuzzlewit," and Joseph Surface, in Sheridan's "The School for Scandal," the name of Molière's Tartuffe has come to be the symbol of a hypocrite. Tartuffe is the leading character of Molière's comedy of the same name. He is a hypocrite and an imposter, who uses religion as a cloak for covetousness and deceit, and succeeds in ingratiating himself so thoroughly with one Orgon, a man of wealth, as to obtain from him the promise of his daughter in marriage.

Tartuffe's true character being finally exposed, he is driven from the house and put in jail for felony. On high authority it is said that the original of Tartuffe was the Abbé de Roquette, a parasite of the Prince de Conde. It is said that the name is derived from the Italian "tartuffoli," meaning truffles, and that it was suggested to Molière on seeing the sudden animation which lit up the faces of certain monks when they heard that a seller of truffles awaited their orders.

Tears, Crocodile's; see *Crocodile's Tears*.

Telling it to the Marines

Probably everyone knows what is meant by the phrase, "Tell it to the marines." The phrase is used when a listener wishes to express doubt of the truth of a statement, without actually calling the speaker a falsifier. It is easier—and oftentimes safer—to invite him to "tell it to the marines."

The phrase is of English origin. In former times the Royal Marines, sometimes known as "Jollies," were made the butt of the sailors' jokes, because of their ignorance of seamanship. "Jolly" was a sailor's nickname for a marine, who in the sailor's opinion, bore the same relation to a "regular" as a jolly boat, or yawl, did to the ship. Another name given to a marine by the sailors was a "Gulpin," that is, a person who would swallow anything that was told to him. Hence arose the expression, "Tell that to the marines; the bluejackets won't believe it," which was a common rejoinder to a "stiff" yarn.

Tenterhooks

Everyone has been "on tenterhooks" at times and knows the feeling of being in suspense, or worried, or very anxious. That is what is meant by being "on tenterhooks."

One definition of the term is "on the stretch." That, however, is more the literal meaning, rather than the figurative, of "on tenterhooks." Cloth, after being woven, is stretched or "tenterhooked" on hooks passed through the selvages. Hence we get the figurative term. It is quite old; it was used by Sir Walter Scott in his novel, "Redgauntlet," in a way that well illustrates its use. He says, "He was not kept an instant on the tenterhooks of impatience longer than the appointed moment."

The word "tenter" is derived from the Latin "tendere," meaning to stretch.

Thespian Art

The Thespian art is the art of reproducing on the dramatic stage the varied emotions of real life—in other words, the art of acting. Sometimes an actor is called a "Thespian."

We get the term "Thespian" from the name of

Thespis, the father of Greek tragedy, who lived during the latter part of the sixth century before Christ. His alteration in the old form of tragedy connected with the Dionysian festivals was the introduction of an actor, for the sake of giving rest to the chorus. This actor played various parts in the same piece under various disguises, which took the form of linen masks.

The poet Dryden, quoting an actor, wrote: "Thespis, the first professor of our art, at country wakes sung ballads from a cart."

Threadneedle Street, Old Lady of; see *Old Lady of Threadneedle Street*.

Throwing Dust

The very common expression, "to throw dust in one's eyes," meaning to deceive intentionally, is derived, it is said, from the Mohammedans. The reference is to a practice of casting dust into the air for the purpose of confounding enemies of the faith.

This was done by Mohammed on two or three occasions, as at the battle of Honein. There is a reference to the incident in the Koran: "Neither didst thou, Mohammed, cast dust into their eyes; but it was God who confounded them." One day the Koreishites surrounded the house of Mohammed, determined to kill him. They peeped through the door and saw him lying asleep. Just then his son-in-law, Ali, opened the door silently and threw into the air a handful of dust. Immediately the conspirators were deceived. They seized Ali for Mohammed and permitted the latter to escape.

Thugs

The word "thug" has embedded itself firmly in the English language, so that now everyone knows

what it means, and it is no longer a figure of speech. Nowadays a thug is a thief who does not hesitate to use violence; the word is a synonym, therefore, for "desperado."

However, originally the thugs were roving bands of fanatical murderers and robbers of India who, before their suppression by the British government in 1830, used to infest various parts of Central and Northern India. The name is derived from the Hindu word "thaga," meaning to deceive. Thuggery, as the system of the thugs was called, had a religious basis, the persons murdered by the thugs and a certain part of their belongings being regarded by the thugs as sacrifices to the goddess Kali.

In some provinces of India the thugs were called "stranglers," in others "noosers," and in still others "cat-gut thieves." The bands became so formidable that the British government of India was finally compelled to take strong measures against them.

Thumb, Biting the; see *Biting the Thumb*.
Thumb, Rule of; see *Rule of Thumb*.

Thumbs Down

Speaking of a statesman who aspired to the Presidency, but whose own State did not support him, an editorial writer said:

"It would be superfluous to state the reasons why, now that his own state has turned thumbs down on him."

The expression, "thumbs down," comes from the ancient gladiatorial games in Rome. If the spectators wished to have spared the life of a defeated gladiator, they concealed their thumbs. Otherwise they turned their thumbs down.

When a gladiator lowered his arms it was a sign that he admitted defeat; his fate then depended on

the spectators of the games; if they wished him to be slain they pressed down their thumbs, and if they wished him to be saved, they turned up their thumbs. But "thumbs down" is used more frequently than "thumbs up."

Thunder, Sons of; see *Sons of Thunder*.

Tilting at Windmills

To "tilt at windmills" means to make war against imaginary evils. We get the phrase from "Don Quixote," by Cervantes. In it we are told that Don Quixote de la Mancha, the hero of the famous book, approached thirty or forty windmills which, he declared to his squire, Sancho Panza, were "giants, two leagues in length or more."

Striking his spurs into Rosinante, his steed, the gallant but "cracked" knight put his lance in rest and drove at one of the monsters. The lance lodged in the sail of the windmill, and the sail, striking both man and beast, lifted them into the air, shivering the lance to pieces. When the valiant knight and his steed fell to the ground they were both much injured. Don Quixote declared that the enchanter Freston who carried off his library with all the books therein had changed the giants into windmills out of malice.

A person whose head is filled with queer ideas is said sometimes to have windmills in his brain. Sancho Panza spoke up to his master, and declared that anyone who could mistake the windmills for anything else "must have had windmills in his head."

Tinker's Dam

Contrary to general belief, the expression, "not worth a tinker's dam," does not convey any sug-

gestion of profanity. It is well known, of course, that everything that is "not worth a tinker's dam" has very little value.

A "tinker's dam" is, according to good authority, "a dam of dough or other suitable material constructed by a tinker to confine his molten solder to the business in hand; that is, to keep it from spreading where it is not needed. Inasmuch as when a 'tinker's dam' has once served its purpose it possesses little or no value, the phrase has come to be a frequently used and almost universally understood synonym for worthlessness."

The same authority goes on to say that "the foregoing explanation refutes the current notion that the expression savors of profanity."

Titian-Haired

Speaking of woman automobile drivers, a man said not long ago in an address: "Brunettes are more careful in driving and have fewer accidents, being more conservative than their fair and 'Titian-haired' sisters."

"Titian-haired," however, is generally used to indicate beautiful reddish golden, such as the famous painter Titian loved to paint.

He is called "the greatest painter of the Venetian school," and painted religious pictures as well as mythological, poetical and allegorical subjects, and as a portrait painter he is ranked among the very best. His works are remarkable for their magnificent coloring and technical skill. Titian, whose real name was Tiziano Vecelli, was born about 1477 and was nearly one hundred years old when he died in 1576. He was highly esteemed in his lifetime, and his fame has grown steadily since then as that of one of the greatest artists of all time.

Toad Eater

A "toad eater" is one who will go to any length to curry favor for himself with the rich and powerful. The exact origin of the name is not known, but it is believed that there was, many years ago, a man who fawned on a powerful nobleman to so great an extent that the latter became disgusted. To see just how far the flatterer would go, the nobleman had a toad cooked for him—and it is recorded that the "toad eater" not only ate it, but praised its flavor!

Some say, however, that a "toad eater" is a boy who acted as assistant to a traveling showman. The latter pretended to be skilled in expelling poison from the human system and, in order to show his skill, had his boy eat a toad in front of an audience. (In former days the toad was believed to be poisonous.)

The designation "toad eater" is related to "toady," which is well known.

Tom, Peeping; see *Peeping Tom*.

Tommy Atkins

Since the days of the early writings of Rudyard Kipling, the term "Tommy Atkins," as a generic name for the British soldier, has become almost as familiar to American readers as to British. But the name is older than that. Some persons believe that Kipling originated "Tommy Atkins," but that is not the case.

The term arose out of a little pocket ledger served out, at one time, to all British soldiers. In these manuals were to be entered the name, the age, the date of enlistment, the length of service, the wounds, the medals, etc., of each individual.

The British War Office sent with each book a form to serve as a guide in filling it out, and the fictitious

name selected, instead of the legal "Richard Roe" or "John Doe" was "Thomas Atkins." The books were instantly called "Tommy Atkins," and it did not take long for the public to apply the name to the soldier himself.

Tongs, Hammer and; see *Hammer and Tongs*.

Top Hole

The expression "top hole," meaning "first class" is English and has gained some currency in the United States as well; it was heard frequently during the war and is met with nowadays in writing and speaking.

An inquirer asked "The Lexicographer," the authority of the "Literary Digest" on grammar, spelling, punctuation, figures of speech, etc., for an explanation of "top hole" and he wrote:

"The term 'top hole' is an Anglicism for 'first class' 'wholly fit,' the origin of which is unknown, but is supposed by Murray to be a mining phrase, as in the quotation, 'The victims at the time of the explosion were engaged in widening the "top hole" between No. 6 and No. 7 levels,' from the 'Dundee Advertiser.' 'A top hole idëa, he called it,' said E. V. Lucas, in 'Over Bemerton's,' and a writer in Blackwood's Magazine wrote, 'A piece like the "Merry Widow" would be top hole.'"

Top Sawyer

A man who is "top sawyer" is one who is prominent in civic or political life, and therefore holds a place in public attention. The expression is used by English and American authors, among them Thomas Hardy, who says, in "The Mayor of Casterbridge," "He'll be top sawyer soon of you, too, and carry all afore him."

We get the expression from the business or pro-

fession of lumbering. A sawyer, says Webster's New International Dictionary, is one whose occupation is to saw timber into planks or boards, or wood into fuel; specifically, the term is applied to either of the two men who work at sawing timber over a pit, called a "saw pit"; one, the "top sawyer," standing above the timber, the other called "the bottom sawyer," standing below it.

"He is 'top sawyer' in the politics of the city now," said a political editorial, "but the coming election may reduce him to the ranks of the onlookers."

Touch of Midas

If you have "the touch of Midas" everything you touch will turn to gold. Fortune will favor you with worldly possessions—but beware lest it play you the same trick it did the original Midas.

He was a King of Phrygia, the son of Gordius and Cybele. He was also a pupil of Orpheus. Having been fortunate enough to do a kindness to Bacchus, in return the god granted his wish that everything he touched should turn to gold. But even the very food of the king changed into the metal, and he was in danger of starving when he begged the god to take back his gift. This could only be done by the king's bathing, at the command of Bacchus, in the river Pactolus. Since that time, according to the old legend, the waters of the river have flowed over sands of gold.

Touchstone

The means whereby we try or test anything we refer to frequently as a "touchstone." An editorial writer said, "This is not the first time that the touchstone of financial markets has elicited the truth concerning the American attitude toward abroad."

The touchstone that is used to test gold is a flinty

slate, a siliceous stone, usually black or of a very dark color. The purity of gold and silver is tested by means of the touchstone by the streak left on the stone when rubbed by the metal. By the color of the streak the assayer is enabled to tell the amount of alloy in the specimen. "Gold is tried by the touchstone, and men by gold," wrote the wise Bacon, English philosopher.

Shakespeare, in "As You Like It," calls one of his characters Touchstone. He is a witty and very clever professional clown.

Truce of God, see *God's Truce*.

True Blue

"True blue" means absolutely honest, faithful and dependable; the expression is used as an adjective, as in the phrase, "true blue Conservatives," or as a noun, when a person is referred to as "a true blue." It is an English mode of expression, and is believed to be derived from "Coventry blue," which is noted for its fast dyeing qualities. In a recent despatch from England it was said, "Only the truest and bluest of the true blue Tories are dissatisfied with Labor's emphatic repudiation of Communism."

Blue or azure has been held in high esteem for many centuries as the symbol of Divine eternity and human immortality. When used in painting as the hue of the garment of an angel, it signifies faith and fidelity. In the dress of the Virgin, it indicates modesty. In heraldry, blue is the color of chastity, loyalty, fidelity and a spotless reputation. The English Covenanters, in the seventeenth century, wore blue as their badge, in opposition to the scarlet of the Royalists.

Truthful James

"If they can each find a Truthful James among their constituents, he will tell them that Congress.

was never so unpopular in the United States as it is to-day," said an editorial writer who did not like some of the things that Congress was doing.

By "Truthful James" is meant a person who "speaks right out in meeting," who tells or blurts out the truth, no matter who is hurt by it. We get the name from Bret Harte, the poet and story teller of the West, who invented Truthful James, under that name, as the narrator of several of Harte's poems. Two of the best known are "The Society on the Stanislaw" and "The Heathen Chinees." The latter, probably the most popular of Harte's verses, was published under the title, "Plain Language From Truthful James." It begins, "Which I wish to remark, and my language is plain, that for ways that are dark and for tricks that are vain, the heathen Chinees is peculiar ; which the same I am free to maintain."

Bret Harte, who was born in 1839 and died in 1902, is not read quite as much as he was a few decades ago, but books dealing with his life and work still find readers among those who are interested in literary matters.

Tuft Hunters

A "tuft hunter" is one who toadies to persons of wealth or social position, and constantly seeks their society. He is a sycophant, a hanger-on of the rich or the great.

The term "tuft hunting" is English in its origin, but the custom is by no means confined to England, of course. In the great English universities, a "tuft" was the name given to a nobleman, and he was so styled because of the silk gowns and tasseled caps worn by noblemen at the universities. Hence those who toadies to such noblemen were called "tuft hunters," and the phrase was extended to those who

observed the same practice in the social world outside of Oxford and Cambridge.

The tassel worn by titled undergraduates at the two great English universities was of gold.

Tulip Craze

"Are we in for another tulip craze?" asked a financial writer, writing about a recent boom in stocks.

He was referring to the reckless speculation that swept over Europe in the seventeenth century, as a result of the tulip-growing mania in the Netherlands. In the years 1634 to 1637, that country went almost literally mad over the growing of tulips. So pronounced was the craze that the name "tulipmania" was coined for it. It was a wild desire for growing or acquiring the flowers, and it led to unbounded speculation in the bulbs and in shares of stock in the companies that grew them or dealt in them.

Tulip marts were set up in Rotterdam, Amsterdam and other cities. A root of the species called "Viceroy" sold for \$1250; "Semper Augustus" sold for more than double that sum. So pronounced did the craze become that finally the government was compelled to take steps against it. It was one of the wildest manifestations of the "get-rich-quick" spirit ever known.

Turkey, Talking; see *Talking Turkey*.

Turncoat

A "turncoat" is a traitor, a person upon whom no reliance can be placed. He turns, or changes his coat according to his interest, not according to principle.

It is believed that we get the expression "turncoat" from an early duke of Savoy, Emanuel by name. Savoy, which belongs now to Italy, was for-

merly a "bone of contention" between that country and France, as it lies on the border between the two countries. Emanuel had his territory raided by the forces of the two neighboring kings, and was obliged to "look sharp" to protect his interests. Sometimes he had to pretend to be French, sometimes Italian. He therefore had a coat made that was blue on one side and white on the other, and might be worn with either side out. When he was supposedly on the side of Italy he wore the blue side out, but when he had to pretend to be French he displayed the white side. He therefore became known as "Emanuel the Turncoat," and the name has therefore come to be applied to those who turn their opinions around to suit their interests.

Turning the Tables

"Turning the tables" on someone means changing an advantage which he has over you into a situation that is to your own advantage. "Johnson's four-bagger in the sixth inning turned the tables neatly on the opposing team," said a baseball writer.

By the Romans maple wood, when knotted and veined, was highly prized for furniture. When boards large enough for constructing tables were found, the extravagance of the buyers knew no limits; to so great an extent was it carried that when a Roman accused his wife of spending too much of his money on pearls, jewels, etc., she used to retort by "turning the tables" on her husband; that is, by bringing up the large sums he spent on the tables.

Another account says that we get the expression, "turning the tables," from the game of backgammon, which was formerly called "the tables." The tables are said to be turned when fortune changes from one player to the other.

Turpin, Dick; see Dick Turpin.

Twins, Siamese; see Siamese Twins.

Two Strings to One's Bow

When a man has "two strings to his bow," he has more than one business or means of support, so that if one fails him he can fall back on the other. Sometimes the phrase is applied to affairs of the heart. If you have two sweethearts and one "goes back on you," you can call upon the other "string to your bow." It is hardly necessary to explain the phrase.

The French have exactly the same phrase, and the Romans used to say, "He is moored with two anchors." The Italian saying has it, "To sail by two winds."

On the other hand, if one spreads his energies in too many directions he is said to have "too many irons in the fire." That phrase, also, hardly requires any explanation.

Ulysses, Bow of; see Bow of Ulysses.

Uncle

The term "uncle," as applied to a pawnbroker, is said to be a pun on the Latin word "uncus," meaning a hook.

Pawnbrokers in ancient days employed a hook to lift articles, before spouts—chutes to facilitate delivery to the storeroom—were adopted. When the latter came into use we got the expression "gone up the spout." It is interesting to note that the French say of an article that is pawned that it is "at my aunt's," and in French the keeper of a prison is called an "uncle"—perhaps because the prisoners are kept in pawn by the Government.

Some say, however, that we use the term "uncle," meaning a pawnbroker, because the latter is referred to, in jest as a rich uncle, a fountain of financial aid.

Uncle, Dutch; see Dutch Uncle.

Uncle Sam

The expression "Uncle Sam," as a synonym for the United States, is said to have originated as follows:

During the War of the Revolution a man named Samuel Wilson was an inspector of beef at Troy, N. Y., and was very popular with the men in his employ. They always called him "Uncle Sam." After the beef was inspected it was shipped by him to a contractor named Elbert Anderson, and was always marked "E. A. U. S." A joker among the workmen, asked the meaning of the initials, replied that he did not know, unless they were meant for Elbert Anderson and "Uncle Sam." The joke was kept up, and it spread, until it became common to refer to all packages marked "U. S." as belonging to "Uncle Sam." Of course, the original marking "U. S." was meant for "United States."

One version of the story has it that both Anderson and Wilson were inspectors of the beef.

Universe, Hub of; see *Hub of the Universe*.

Unknown, Great; see *Great Unknown*.

Up the Spout

When you "shove" something "up the spout" you put it in pawn. Sometimes you simply "spout" it, but the expression, "up the spout" is probably more common.

Like so many other common sayings, we get this one from England. The "spout" means the chute up which pawnbrokers send the articles left with them. Naturally, when the articles are redeemed they come down the spout, from the storeroom to the redemption counter.

Many years ago Lord Shaftesbury, the famous English philanthropist, made a speech in the House of Lords in which he said: "As for spoons, forks

and jewelry, they are not taken so readily to the melting pot, but to well known places where there is a pipe (a spout) which your lordships may have seen in a pawnbroker's shop. The thief taps, the pipe is lifted up, and in the course of a minute a hand comes out, covered with a glove, takes up the article, and gives out the money for it."

Sometimes "up the spout" means the same as "done for."

Upas Tree

"The shrill tirade of little men who meanly live in envy's upas shade," wrote a newspaper poet recently.

The upas tree, according to ancient belief which is now discredited, destroyed all who approached it. Its "deadly shade" has been a familiar metaphor in literature for many years. The upas is an actual tree which grows in the island of Java. Although its shade does not kill, the sap or juice of the tree is really deadly when used as an arrow poison by the natives of Java.

The upas tree, or its shade, is used sometimes as a name for something which casts a deadly blight all about it.

Upper Crust

If you belong to the "upper crust," you are of the very elect of society. You are at the top of the social ladder. Your position is assured. The term was used by Thomas C. Haliburton, a Nova Scotian historian and humorist of the last century. In one of his books, "Sam Slick in England," he says:

"I want you to see Peel, Stanley, Graham, Shiel, Russell, Macaulay, Old Joe, and so on. They are all upper crust here."

Utopia

"Utopia" is the name of an imaginary island, the scene of Sir Thomas More's romance of the "Happy Republic." According to the author, the island was discovered by a companion of Amerigo Vespucci, after whom America was named. Utopia was the abode of a happy society, which, by virtue of its wise organization and legislation, was wholly free from the harassing cares, inordinate and greedy desires and attendant customary miseries of mankind.

In Utopia there is no greed, no passion, no malice, no hatred, and everyone is perfectly happy. However, it is to be borne in mind that Sir Thomas More formed the name from two Greek words "ou," meaning "not," and "topos," meaning "place"—in other words, "Utopia" means "nowhere."

"Utopian" schemes or plans are those that cannot possibly be brought to realization.

Vampire

Although the belief in the vampire—the disembodied ghost believed to return to earth and suck the blood of sleeping persons, causing their death—has practically died out among civilized persons, it still lingers in some districts of eastern Europe. The belief is very ancient.

"The persons who turn vampires are generally wizards, witches, suicides and persons who have come to a violent end or have been cursed by their parents or by the church," says the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

While the belief in the actual existence of vampires persists only among the ignorant, the word is used frequently in a figurative sense of a person who preys upon another and sucks from the latter his very life-blood. Burne-Jones' picture of the vampire and Kipling's poem, "The Vampire,"

helped greatly to bring the term into more common use.

Velvet

When a card player "operates" with money which he has already won, he is said to be playing "on velvet." The dictionary says the expression is slang, and casts no light on its origin.

But from another authority we learn that there is an old saying, to "prophesy upon velvet," which means to prophesy what is already known. Thus, the result of a battle flashed to an individual may by some chance come to the knowledge of a so-called prophet, who may then safely "foretell" it and add to his reputation. But such a prediction would be a "prophecy upon velvet"; that is, it would go about on velvet slippers without fear of stumbling.

The expression "on velvet" is not new; it is at least one hundred years old. It was used by Sir Walter Scott in his story, "The Pirate." Scott, by the way, in his researches into the old-time history and poetry of Scotland, ran across many of the ancient sayings, and preserved them in his novels.

Vendetta

Swearing or declaring a vendetta means putting into effect, by means of a solemn oath, a blood feud, to avenge the shedding of blood. Corsica, the mountain regions of some of our southern states, Montenegro, and other regions have been the scenes of vendettas.

One authority says that the origin of the vendetta in Corsica has often been referred to the lawlessness which prevailed in the island during the Genoese domination. The women instigate the men to revenge by singing songs of vengeance over the bodies of the slain, and displaying his bloodstained gar-

ments. Often a mother affixes to her son's dress a bloody shred from the dead man's shirt, that he may have a constant reminder of the duty of taking vengeance. The duty of carrying on the vendetta rests primarily and especially upon the next of kin. Not to take revenge is deemed dishonorable in the highest degree by the Corsicans, and any delay in doing so on the part of the next of kin is made a matter of reproach by his relatives.

Vere de Vere, Caste of; see *Caste of Vere de Vere*.

Vigilantes

The name "Vigilantes" is assumed, sometimes, by bodies of men who take it upon themselves, without legal authority, to see that the law is enforced. It has also been taken by various societies. The original "Vigilantes" got their name from the Spanish language. They operated in California.

"Among those who hastened to California after the discovery of gold, in 1849," says the "American Political Dictionary," "were many lawless characters, who soon caused a reign of terror. The territory became a state, in 1850, but the laws seemed powerless to restrain the commission of crime. To alter this condition of affairs, large numbers of the best citizens, irrespective of party, banded together in San Francisco and other places in 1851, under the name of 'Vigilance Committees,' took the law into their own hands, and by their vigorous actions gradually restored the country to a safe and peaceable state. In 1856 they were again forced to administer the law. They held trials and administered justice as to them seemed right."

Voodoo

By "voodoo" or "voodooism" is meant the practice of certain degraded or superstitious rites, ob-

served in secret and carefully guarded, by descendants of African negroes, in America and the West Indies. In its figurative sense the word is used frequently for any system of "black magic," so-called. "Not all the voodoo of the party caucus can exorcise the shadow of impending defeat," says a newspaper editorial.

"Voodoo" is regarded as a relic of African barbarism, transplanted to the western side of the Atlantic. In its most terrible form it is said to include human sacrifices and even cannibalism, but it is also said, on good authority, that the terrible nature of the rites of "voodooism" has been greatly exaggerated.

The central feature of voodoo worship is believed to be the adoration of a serpent that figures in the primitive religions of many peoples.

Walking the Plank

"Walking the plank" has two meanings, literal and figurative. In the literal sense it refers to the cruel practice of the old-time pirates, who put captives to death by making them walk off a plank extended over the bulwarks, so that they fell into the sea and were drowned. Literature that deals with piracy is filled with reference to the practice; sometimes there are gruesome details of the victims being prodded with cutlasses and knives to force them along the way to their watery ends.

In the figurative sense, a man is made to "walk the plank" when he is dismissed summarily from office, or compelled to hand in his resignation. He goes, as does the unhappy victim of the pirates, but he goes reluctantly and under compulsion.

The word "walk" is used in several other figurative phrases, such as "to walk a chalk mark," meaning to take the straight and narrow way of virtue or

to demonstrate soberness by walking along a straight chalk line; to "walk Spanish" means to be propelled from behind, as, for example, with someone's hand on the seat of the trousers and another hand on the collar.

Wallop

Many a person uses the word "wallop," as in the sentence, "He got an awful wallop," meaning "He received a heavy blow," without knowing that the word "wallop" is a true figure of speech. It is derived from a man's name.

In the reign of Henry VIII of England, Sir John Wallop, a doughty English warrior, was sent to Normandy to make reprisals against the French for the burning of Brighton by the enemy's fleet. Sir John burned twenty-one towns and villages, demolishing several harbors, and "walloped" the enemy to his heart's content. Not only that, but he added a noun and a verb to the English language.

The word has been used by many English and American authors. J. C. Neal, in "Charcoal Sketches," an American work, wrote, "All I know was walloped into me; I took larnin' through the skin."

War, Sinews of; see *Sinews of War*.

Watered Stock

To "water" a stock means to increase the total par value, without really adding to the assets. The plan was simple, and consisted only of estimating the stock at a figure greatly above its real value. For instance, when the late "Commodore" Vanderbilt obtained control of the New York Central as well as of the Hudson River Railroad, in 1868, the combined stock of the two roads was only about \$36,000,000. Early in the following year he declared a tremendous

dividend of new stock to the stockholders, and raised the estimated value of the two roads to \$90,000,000. His critics said that this action was taken to evade a law of the State of New York which provided that when the dividends of any railroad corporation should reach 10 per cent the state could declare how the surplus above 10 per cent should be applied.

In "The Book of Daniel Drew," by Bouck White, the origin of the term "watered stock" is given. Drew sold to Henry Astor, of New York, a lot of cattle, but first fed salt to the animals and then, just before disposing of them to Astor for a good price, watered them heavily. As a result, water was paid for at the price of beef.

Waterloo

To meet one's "Waterloo" means to meet with utter, irremediable defeat, such as Napoleon Bonaparte met on the famous battlefield of Waterloo, June 18, 1815. Of course, since that date there have been battles of far greater extent and importance than Waterloo, but none of the others has yet left its impress upon the language.

Waterloo is a village situated a few miles south of Brussels, and was chosen by the British commander, the Duke of Wellington, for its strategic position relatively to the line of fortresses on the northeastern frontier of France, as the most advantageous place to resist the advance of Bonaparte on the Belgian capital. The outstanding features of Waterloo were the extraordinary and long continued resistance of the British infantry to the unremitting cannonade of the French artillery, the dramatic arrival of Blücher and Bülow with three corps of the Prussian army, and the routing of Napoleon's famous "Old Guard" under Ney.

The inevitable result of the battle at Waterloo was

the abdication of Napoleon, with his subsequent exile to Saint Helena and his death there six years later. Waters, Oil on; see *Oil on the Waters*.

Wearer of the Ermine

Whoever wears the ermine must be above suspicion, like the wife of Cæsar, for the ermine is the badge of the holder of judicial office. "It was the ermine," says a recent editorial, "that supplied the fur that gave a finishing touch to the decoration of kings and some judges. How else could it have become such a terrible charge to say that one of these has 'stained the ermine?'"

Concerning the origin of the word "ermine," two interesting accounts are given. The French authority on philosophy, Littré, says that we get the word from Armenia, and says that the animal is the "Pon-tic rat" mentioned by Pliny, but if that is so, the better spelling would be "armine." Professor Skeat, an English authority, says that "ermine" is derived from the French "hermine," which means the ermine. The animal is known also in England as the stoat. Its fur is one of the most valuable known. Web of Penelope; see *Penelope, Web of*.

Werewolf

The werewolf stands in literature as a symbol of something frightful almost beyond imagination, of a "terror that walks by night." A werewolf is a person who, according to ancient belief, is transformed into a wolf, or who has the power of changing himself into a wolf, with all the evil propensities that have given the wolf a bad name among animals.

The werewolf was believed in the olden days to prey on his fellowmen, and many cases of disappearance were attributed to the animal-men in the olden days. Belief in the existence of werewolves

was widespread, and it still lingers in parts of France, in Serbia, Wallachia and parts of Russia. Of course, the spread of education has done much to eradicate such superstitious beliefs. But in the fifteenth century a council of theologians, convoked by the Emperor Sigismund, gravely decided that the werewolf was a reality.

Wheel, Butterfly on; see *Butterfly on the Wheel*.
Wheel, Spoke in; see *Spoke in His Wheel*.

When Greek Meets Greek

"When Greek meets Greek" you may expect a good "scrap," according to the writers. The expression finds its way into the sporting pages occasionally, as in the case of a writer who began his description of a prizefight by saying "Greek met Greek last night when the two leading contenders for the lightweight title got together to settle their differences."

We get the expression from Nathaniel Lee, an English playwright of the seventeenth century, who wrote, in his drama, "Alexander the Great," "When Greeks joined Greeks, then was the tug of war." He referred to the contest between Philip of Macedon (and, later, his son, Alexander the Great) on the one hand, and the Greeks on the other.

"It is all Greek to me" means, "I cannot understand it." The expression is quite old, and was employed by Shakespeare in his play, "Julius Cæsar."

White Elephant

To have a white elephant on one's hands, as the saying goes, is to be burdened with something that is a great care and expense, or source of trouble, and which cannot be easily gotten rid of. Thus, if a business man, believing that he can increase his business, rents promises that are too large, and his hopes

prove unfounded, he is said to have a white elephant on his hands.

The origin of the term is rather obscure. One account says that a traveling circus proprietor, to outdo a rival, advertised that he had the only white elephant in captivity. The whiteness of this elephant was due, of course, to liberal applications of white-wash at such times as the animal was not on public view. Naturally, the whiteness did not last well, and the bother and expense of keeping the elephant white were very great. So the showman was said to have a "white elephant on his hands."

In Siam the white or albino elephant is, or was, held in great respect, and keeping one was very expensive. It is said that the king of Siam used to make a present of a white elephant to any of his courtiers whom he wished to ruin.

White Feather

The expression "to show the white feather" is well known, of course, but its origin may not be so familiar to the reader. He probably knows, however, that it means to display cowardice, to back down in the face of danger or threats.

According to "Idioms and Idiomatic Phrases," by Vizetelly and De Bekker, the idiom, "to show the white feather," has been traced to cock fighting and to the fact that a cross-bred gamecock has white feathers in its tail, but the pure-bred bird has only red and black feathers. Birds with the white feathers proved to be poor fighters, to have less pluck, and, therefore, were never trained for the pit.

Widow's Cruse

"This revolving fund will be, if properly managed, a widow's cruse for the state," said a newspaper

editorial in reference to a proposed experiment in state finance.

By "widow's cruse" is meant a small supply of anything—sometimes quite inadequate, seemingly, for the purpose in hand—which, by wise management, is made to go a long way and to seem to be inexhaustible.

The reference is to the story of the miracle of the cruse of oil in the Bible (II Kings, chapter 4), in which story it is related how a certain woman came to Elisha the prophet and asked aid, telling him that a creditor was about to take her two sons to be bondmen, to satisfy her dead husband's debt. She had in her house nothing but a pot of oil. The prophet told her to borrow vessels "not a few" from all her neighbors. And from her single pot of oil all the vessels which she borrowed were filled, so that she had enough oil to sell to pay her debt and live with her children on what was left over.

Wife, Cæsar's; see *Cæsar's Wife*.

Wigs, Big; see *Big Wigs*.

Wild Cat

We do not hear so much nowadays about "wild cat" currency, stocks, bonds, speculations, and the like, since the laws regulating such matters have become more stringent. But a generation or two ago the use of the term was quite common. "Wild cat" means, of course, unsafe, unsound, unreliable.

About thirty years ago the following explanation of the term was published:

"In a general way the term 'wild cat' was applied to depreciated paper money during the Civil War, but more particularly to the notes of the banks of the State of Michigan, which had on their face the picture of a panther. It was applied to the bills of these banks by those who had suffered loss by

taking them. It was one of several opprobrious epithets justly given to the money issued by banks doing business under State charters, as well as to the banks themselves."

Wild Goose Chase

To go on a wild goose chase means to spend valuable time in something that is not worth while, or to chase something that is not worth having after it is caught. Sometimes it means to hunt something that cannot possibly be caught. There is also an expression, to send someone on a wild goose chase, which is the same as sending him on a fool's errand.

The chase after the wild goose has two defects, says one writer; first, it is very hard to catch the wild goose; second, it is of very little worth after it is caught. To lead one a wild goose chase means to beguile one with false hopes, or to put one on the pursuit of something that is not practicable, or at any rate not worth the chase.

When "the goose hangs high" everything is well, but when you "cook a man's goose" for him you "settle his hash," or "put him out of business."

Wild Oats

Perhaps it is unnecessary to define what is meant by "sowing wild oats," since the phrase is in very common use. Everyone knows that a man who has "sown his wild oats" has given up the wild ways of his youth and young manhood, and has settled down to a steady life.

In the lands of the north, in Scandinavia, thick vapors rise from the earth just before the land bursts into vegetation. These vapors are called in Denmark "Lokkens havre," which means, "Loki's wild oats." When the fine weather succeeds the rising of the

vapors, the Danes say, "Loki has sown his wild oats."

Loki is the god of strife and the spirit of evil in the Norse mythology. He is mischievous and cunning, and able to transform himself, in order to carry out his evil purposes, into all sorts of shapes. Many tales are told of Loki, who is one of the leading figures in the old Northern tales.

Wind, Sailing Close to; see *Sailing Close to the Wind*.

Windfall

A turn of unexpected good fortune is generally known as a "windfall." While it is generally believed that the word is connected with the garnering of fruit that is forced from the trees by the wind, the following account is also given:

Some of the English nobility were forbidden, in the olden days, to fell timber, by the terms of the tenure by which they held their estates; all the trees were reserved for the use of the royal navy. Those trees which were blown down by the wind were, however, expressly excepted from the provisions of the law, and therefore, a very high wind, which blew down a great quantity of timber, was often regarded as a godsend.

The foregoing is given in explanation of the figurative use of the term "windfall"; there is also a literal use of the word, in which it means a sudden high wind or downrush of air from higher ground.

Windmills, Tilting at; see *Tilting at Windmills*.

Winds, Sale of; see *Sale of the Winds*.

Winning One's Spurs

Speaking of a statesman then recently deceased, an editorial writer said, "Like Henry Clay and William Pitt, he early won his spurs in the field of statesmanship."

The expression, "to win one's spurs," dates from the age of chivalry and knighthood. When a man who had not reached the rank of knight distinguished himself by some act of bravery it was customary to advance him to that rank, and when he was dubbed "Sir" the person who conferred the honor (generally the sovereign) presented him with a pair of gilt spurs as a badge of knighthood.

Hence, the term "to win one's spurs" means to win recognition of accomplishment, and reward therefor.

Winning the Palm

From very ancient days, the leaf of the palm tree has been employed as a symbol of victory or rejoicing; therefore, to win the palm means to gain recognition of merit. "Let him who merits it wear the palm," is an old Latin saying.

"So get the start of the majestic world, and bear the palm alone," says Shakespeare, and in the Gospel according to St. John, chapter xii, verses 12 and 13, it is recorded that "on the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him." The other gospels say that the branches of the palm were strewn in the way.

The palm tree is said to grow faster for being weighed down. Hence it is the symbol of resolution overcoming calamity. Among the Orientals it is believed that the palm tree sprang originally from the residue of the clay of which Adam was formed.

With a Grain of Salt

You hear a story which may or may not be true. You have reason to doubt it, or you may know that the person who tells the story sometimes "draws the

long bow." So you take the story "with a grain of salt." If you are "up" in Latin, or in the literary language, you say that you take it "*cum grano salis*," which means exactly the same thing.

In other words, you need a grain of salt—or more than a grain—to make the story go down. The French have the saying, "He could eat him with a grain of salt," meaning "He could double up and swallow such a fellow as easily as one could swallow a grain of salt." It will be noted, of course, that the French phrase has a meaning quite different from that of the English.

One writer says that "with a grain of salt" means "with great limitations, with its grain of salt, or truth; as salt is sparingly used in condiments, so is truth in the remark just made."

Wolf at the Door

Having "the wolf at the door" is a very unpleasant experience, since it means that dire want stands at the threshold, and is ready to poke within its grisly head. Conversely, of course, "keeping the wolf away from the door" means possessing sufficient means to avert poverty and its evil consequences. "She will have, at least, enough money to keep the wolf from the door," said a writer of a daughter of a millionaire whose father had "cut her off" with \$100,000.

For many centuries, the wolf has been taken in Europe as the symbol of ravenous hunger and distress. The French and the Germans both say of a person with an uncontrollable appetite that "he has a wolf in the stomach." "*Wolfs magen*," the stomach of a wolf, is the German for a keen appetite. The French say, "*Manger comme un loup*," that is, "to eat like a wolf," meaning to eat voraciously, and in English we say that a person "wolfs" his food when

he devours it greedily and voraciously, as an animal does, especially a wolf.

Wolf, Crying; see *Crying Wolf*.
Wonder, Nine Days'; see *Nine Days' Wonder*.

Wooden Horse

The wooden horse, sometimes called the wooden horse of Troy, is a symbol of a gift that brings death or disaster to the receiver. The story goes back to the famous siege of Troy.

Virgil tells us that Ulysses had a monster wooden horse made after the death of Hector, champion of the Greeks at the siege. The crafty Ulysses gave out that it was an offering to the gods to secure a prosperous voyage for the Greeks back to their own land. He left the great creation outside the walls of Troy, but, unfortunately for the doomed city, it was filled with Greek soldiers, so that when the Trojans dragged it within the walls they were admitting their own fate. At night the Greeks stole out of their place of concealment, slew the Trojan guards, opened the city gates to their comrades, and set fire to the city.

Woolsack

"He will never reach the woolsack," the English say sometimes of a lawyer who shows no signs of ever reaching eminence in his profession. They mean that he will never attain the highest post attainable by an English legal light, that of Lord Chancellor of England.

The seat of the Lord Chancellor in the House of Lords is called the "woolsack." It is a large, square bag of wool, without back or arms and covered with red cloth. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in the sixteenth century, an act of Parliament was passed to prevent the exportation of wool; and

in order that this source of England's national wealth might be kept constantly in mind, woolsacks were placed in the House of Lords, whereon the judges sat. Hence, the Lord Chancellor of England, who presides in the House of Lords, is said to sit "on the woolsack" or to be "appointed to the woolsack." Wrong Box, in the; see *In the Wrong Box*.

Xantippe

If you value your peace of mind—and your bodily safety, perhaps—do not call a woman a Xantippe; that is, if she is a woman of any education and acquainted even slightly with the classics. It is a term that denotes a woman whose shrewish tongue and uncontrollable temper make life with her impossible.

Xantippe was a real person and, strange to say, was the wife of the famous Socrates, who is renowned as one of the wisest men of all time. According to some authorities, Xantippe's faults were counterbalanced by many worthy traits. In spite of her bad temper she was a fine housekeeper and had many other domestic virtues. Perhaps she found life just a little trying with a man who was as wise as Socrates. The term "Xantippe" to denote a scold is in common use among Germans and other peoples.

Yahoo

To call a person a "Yahoo" is to insult him deeply. It means that you consider him a raw countryman, a lout; in slangy words, a "greenhorn," a "hick," "yap" or "rube." In fact, it means something far worse than that—a person just a step or two above a brute beast.

We get the term "Yahoo" from the famous "Gulliver's Travels" of Swift. In his fourth and last voyage Gulliver goes to the land of educated horses,

the Houyhnhnms, who hold in subjection a race of human animals which are kept in a state of servitude and degradation. These human animals Swift calls "Yahoos." The terribly caustic satirist says, "What business has the world of Yahoos with standards at all? Man being what he is, decency and comeliness are but conventions." In Swift's description of the Yahoos, the worst that can be said of mankind is told once for all, according to critics.

Yellow Plushers

"America is not free by any manner of means from Pecksniffs and yellow plushers," said Vice President Marshall in his reminiscences.

By "yellow plushers" Mr. Marshall meant flunkies, or snobs. The reference is to the book by William Makepeace Thackeray, "Yellowplush Correspondence," published in 1837. In commenting on the works of Thackeray, the famous French critic Taine wrote:

"The snob is a child of aristocratical societies; perched on his step of the long ladder, he respects the man on the step above him, and despises the man on the step below, without inquiring what they are worth, solely on account of their position; in his innermost heart he finds it natural to kiss the boots of the first, and to kick the second. Thackeray reckons up at length the degrees of this habit."

Yeoman Service

One who renders great and loyal service to a cause is said to give "yeoman service." The reference is to the renown gained by the English yeomanry in the centuries of English history. They were doughty warriors, especially with the old long bow. The phrase, "yeoman service," is very old in English literature, and dates back at least as far as

Shakepeare's day. He uses it in "Hamlet," Act V, scene I.

A yeoman was anciently a forty-shilling freeholder, and as such was qualified to vote, and to serve on juries. In more modern times the yeoman was any farmer who cultivated his own free-hold property. Later still, the term came to mean a farmer of the upper class, tenant or otherwise.

The name "yeoman" is given in the United States Navy to a petty officer enlisted or rated to perform clerical duties.

Youth, Fountain of; see *Fountain of Youth*.

